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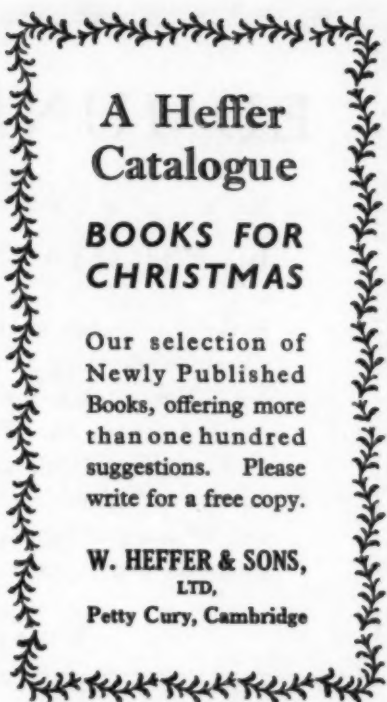
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THE CORNHILL



No. 985

Winter 1950/1951

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Whereas questions of style are frequently debated at Wimbledon and Ascot, and music-lovers are deeply concerned with the technical rise or decline of their favourite pianist or violinist, discussions of literary method—detailed writing about writing—do not always receive the attention they deserve among intelligent readers of books. To some extent the deficiencies of the modern literary critic may perhaps be held responsible. Not many contemporary authors write readably about their own business; and those who criticise rather than create usually prefer to treat style—the actual selection of words and marshalling of sentences and paragraphs—as a somewhat arid side-issue. An important step in the right direction, however, seems to have been taken by an essay on Edmund Burke which we are privileged to publish here. Not only does it combine an expert appreciation of one of our greatest English prose-writers with a sketch of the peculiar personal temperament that underlay his literary art; but it contains an analysis of the methods he adopted to give his prose a cutting-edge. Nor is it the tribute of an admiring imitator. The essayist's method at its best could scarcely be more unlike Burke's, except in so far as both writers have laboured incessantly to achieve a fitting vehicle, a means of expression that corresponded, honestly and accurately, to their individual thoughts and feelings. This assessment of the genius of Burke may also throw for his future biographer a revealing light on the evolution of William Somerset Maugham.

[The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.]

Subscriptions for the CORNHILL are available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for 4 issues costs 10s. 8d. and for 8 issues 21s. 4d., including postage. At present the CORNHILL appears quarterly.]

The Flag

BY H. E. BATES

'**W**E are surrounded by the most ghastly people,' the Captain said. All across miles of unbroken pasture there was not another house.

Up through the South avenue of elms, where dead trees lifted scraggy bone against spring sky, bluebells grew like thick blue corn spreading into the edges of surrounding grass. The wind came softly, in a series of light circles, from the west. Here and there an elm had died and on either side of it young green leaves from living trees were laced about smoke-brown brittle branches. In a quadrangle of wall and grass the great house lay below.

'You never really see the beauty of the house until you get up here,' the Captain said. Though still young, not more than forty-five or so, he was becoming much too fat. His ears were like thickly veined purple cabbage-leaves unfurling on either side of flabby swollen cheeks. His mouth, pink and flaccid, trembled sometimes like the underlip of a cow.

'They have killed the elms,' he said. 'Finished them. They used to be absolutely magnificent.'

He stopped for a moment. I saw that he wanted to draw breath and we looked back down the hill. Down beyond soldierly lines of trees, the tender lucent green broken here and there by the black of dead branches, I could see a flag waving in such intermittent and strengthless puffs of air that it too seemed dead. It was quartered in green and scarlet and flew from a small round tower that was like a grey pepper-box stuck in the western arm of the cross-shaped house.

Now I could see too that there were four avenues of elms, repeating in immense pattern the cross of the house below. As we stood there, the Captain making gargling noises in his throat, a cuckoo began calling on notes that were so full and hollow that it was like a bell tolling from the elms above us. Presently it seemed to be thrown on a gust of air from the tip of a tree, to float down-wind like a bird of grey paper.

THE FLAG

'There she goes,' I said.

'Tank emplacement mostly,' the Captain said. His face shone lividly in the sun, his lip trembling. 'The place was occupied right left and centre. We used to have deer too, but the last battalion wiped them out.'

The breath of bluebells was overpoweringly sweet on the warm wind.

'When we get a little higher you will see the whole pattern of the thing,' the Captain said.

Turning to renew the ascent, he puffed in preparation, his veins standing out like purple worms on his face and neck and forehead.

'Tired?' he said. 'Not too much for you? You don't mind being dragged up here?'

'Not at all.'

'One really has to see it from up here. One doesn't grasp it otherwise. That's the point.'

'Of course.'

'We shall have a drink when we get back,' he said. He laughed and the eyes, very blue but transparent in their wateriness, were sad and friendly. 'In fact we shall have several drinks.'

It was only another fifty yards to the crown of the hill and we climbed it in silence except for the hissing of the Captain's breath against his teeth. All the loveliness of spring came down the hill and past us in a stream of heavy fragrance and at the top, when I turned, I could feel it blowing past me, the wind silky on the palms of my hands, to shine all down the hill on the bent sweet grasses.

'Now,' the Captain said. It was some moments before he could get breath to say another word. Moisture had gathered in confusing drops on the pink lids of his eyes. He wiped it away.

'Now you can see it all.'

All below us, in the wide green hollow on which there was not another house, I could see, as he said, the pattern of the thing. Creamy grey in the sun, the house made its central cross of stone, the four avenues of elms like pennants of pale green flying from the arms of it across the field.

'Wonderful,' I said.

'Wonderful but not unique,' he said. 'Not unique.'

Not angrily at first but wearily, rather sadly, he pointed about him with both arms. 'It's simply one of six or seven examples here alone.'

Then anger flitted suddenly through the obese watery-eyed face

with such heat that the whole expression seemed to rise to a bursting fester and I thought he was about to rush, in destructive attack at something, down the hill.

'It was all done by great chaps,' he said, 'creative chaps. It's only we of this generation who are such absolute destructive clots.'

'Oh! I don't know.'

'Won't even argue about it,' he said. His face, turned to the sun, disclosed now an appearance of rosy calm, almost boy-like, and he had recovered his breath: 'Once we were surrounded by the most frightfully nice people. I don't mean to say intellectual people and that kind of thing, but really awfully nice. You know, you could talk to them. They were on your level.'

'Yes.'

'And now you see what I mean, they've gone. God knows where, but they're finished. I tell you everything is a shambles.'

Across from another avenue the cuckoo called down wind again and over the house I saw the flag lifted in a green and scarlet flash on the same burst of breeze. I wanted to ask him about the flag but he said:

'It's perfectly ghastly. They've been hounded out. None of them left. All of them gone——'

Abruptly he seemed to give it up. He made gestures of apology, dropping his hands.

'So sorry. Awfully boring for you, I feel. Are you thirsty? Shall we go down?'

'When you're ready. I'd like to see the house——'

'Oh! please, of course. I'd like a drink anyway.'

He took a last wide look at the great pattern of elm and stone, breathing the deep, almost too sweet, scent of the hill.

'That's another thing. These perishers don't know the elements of decent drinking. One gets invited to the dreariest cocktail parties. The drinks are mixed in a jug and the sherry comes from God knows where.' Anger was again reddening his face to the appearance of a swollen fresher. 'One gets so depressed that one goes home and starts beating it up. You know?'

I said yes, I knew, and we began to walk slowly down the hill, breathing sun-warm air deeply, pausing fairly frequently for another glance at the scene below.

'How is it with you?' he said. 'In your part of the world? Are you surrounded by hordes of virgin spinsters?'

'They are always with us,' I said.

THE FLAG

He laughed and in that more cheerful moment I asked him about the flag.

'Oh! it's nothing much.' He seemed inclined to belittle it, I thought. 'It gives a touch of colour.'

'I must look at it.'

'Of course. We can go up to the tower. There's a simply splendid view from there. You can see everything. But we shall have a drink first. Yes?'

'Thank you.'

'My wife will be there now. She will want to meet you.'

Slowly we went down to the house. About its deep surrounding walls there were no flowers. The grass had not been mown since some time in the previous summer but old crucified peaches and here and there an apricot had set their flowers for fruiting and it was hot in the hollow between the walls. At the long flight of stone steps, before the front door, the Captain said something in a desultory way about the beauty of the high windows but evidently he did not expect a reply. He leapt up the last four or five steps with the rather desperate agility of a man who has won a race at last, and a moment later we were in the house.

In the large high windowed room with its prospect of unmown grass the Captain poured drinks and then walked nervously about with a glass in his hands. I do not know how many drinks he had before his wife appeared but they were large and he drank them quickly.

'Forty-six rooms and this is all we can keep warm,' he said.

When his wife came in at last she was carrying bunches of stiff robin-orange lilies. She was very dark and her hands, folded about the lily stalks, were not unlike long blanched stalks of uprooted flowers themselves. She had a hard pallor about her face, very beautiful but in a way detached and not real, that made the Captain's festering rosininess seem more florid than ever.

I liked the lilies and when I asked about them she said:

'We must ask Williams about them. I'm frightful at names. He'll know.'

'Williams knows everything,' the Captain said.

He poured a drink without asking her what she wanted and she seemed to suck at the edge of the glass, drawing in her lips so that they made a tight scarlet bud.

'Are you keen on flowers?' she said.

I said 'Yes' and she looked at me in a direct clear way that

could not have been more formal. Her eyes had slits of green, like cracks, slashed across the black.

'That's nice,' she said.

'Has Williams done the cabbages?' the Captain said.

'What cabbages? Where?'

'He knew damn well he had cabbages to do,' the Captain said.

'I told him so.'

'How should I know what he has to do and what he hasn't to do?' she said.

'How should you know,' he said. He drank with trembling hands, trying to steady himself a little. He went to the window and stared out. The room was so large that his wife and I seemed to be contained, after his walking away, in a separate and private world bordered by the big fireless hearth and the vase where she was arranging flowers. She smiled and I looked at her hands.

'Williams will tell you the name of the flowers if you like to come along to the conservatory before you go.' She did not raise her voice; there was no sound except the plop of lily stalks falling softly into the water in the vase. 'He would like it. He likes people who are interested.'

She dropped in the last of the lilies and then took off her coat and laid it on a chair. It was black and underneath she was wearing a yellow jumper of perpendicular ribbed pattern over a black skirt. It went very well with her black hair, her white long face and her green-shot eyes.

I heard the Captain pouring himself another drink and he said:

'What about the tower? You still want to go up?'

'I really ought to go.'

'Oh! Good God man, no. We've hardly seen a thing.'

'He's coming to see the conservatory, anyway,' his wife said.

'Is that so?' he said. 'Well, if he's to see everything you'd better get cracking.'

He made a jabbing kind of gesture against the air with his glass and he was so close to the window that I thought for a moment he would smash one glass against another. I could not tell if he were nervous or impatient. He covered it up by pouring himself another drink and his wife said, with acid sweetness:

'There are guests, too, my dear.'

'No, thanks,' I said.

'You haven't had anything,' the Captain said. 'Good God, I feel like beating it up.'

THE FLAG

'If you still want to see the conservatory I think we'd better go,' she said.

I went out of the room with her and we were some way to the conservatory, which really turned out to be a hothouse of frilled Victorian pattern beyond the walls on the south side of the house, before I realised that the Captain was not with us.

'Williams,' she called several times. 'Williams.' Big scarlet amaryllis trumpets stared out through the long house of glass. 'Ted!'

Presently Williams came out of the potting shed and I thought he seemed startled at the sight of me. He was a man of thirty-five or so with thick lips and carefully combed dark brown hair that he had allowed to grow into a curly pad in his neck. There was a kind of stiff correct strength about him as he stared straight back at her.

She introduced me and said, 'We'd like to see the conservatory.'

'Yes, madam,' he said.

It was very beautiful in the conservatory. The pipes were still on and the air was moistly sweet and strangling. The big scarlet and pink and crimson-black amaryllis had a kind of golden frost in their throats. They were very fiery and splendid among banks of maidenhair and when I admired them Williams said:

'Thank you, sir. They're not bad.'

'Don't be so modest,' she said. 'They're absolutely the best ever.'

He smiled.

'What we haven't done to get them up to this,' she said.

I walked to the far end by the house to look at a batch of young carnations and when I turned back the Captain's wife was holding Williams by the coat-sleeve. It was exactly as if she were absent-mindedly picking a piece of dust from it; yet it was also as if she held him locked, in a pair of pincers. I heard her saying something too, but what it was I never knew because at that moment the fiery festering figure of the Captain began shouting down the path from the direction of the house. I could not hear what he said, either.

'He's worrying to get you up to the tower,' she said. 'I'm frightfully sorry you're being dragged about like this.'

'Not at all.'

Williams opened the door for me. The cuckoo was calling up the hillside and the Captain, more rosy than ever, was coming up the path.

'Don't want to hurry you but it takes longer than you think to get up there.'

At the door of the conservatory his wife stretched out her hand. 'I'll say good-bye,' she said, 'in case I don't see you again.' We shook hands and her hand, in curious contrast to the moist sweet heat of the house behind her, was dry and cool. Williams did not come to say good-bye. He had hidden himself beyond the central staging of palm and fern.

The Captain and I walked up to the tower. Once again we could see, as from the top of the hill, the whole pattern of the thing: the four avenues of elm flying like long green pennants from the central cross of the house, the quadrangle of stone below, the corn-like bluebells wind-sheaved on the hill. The Captain staggered about, pointing with unsteady fingers at the landscape, and the flag flapped in the wind.

'Curious thing is you can see everything and yet can't see a damned thing,' the Captain said. On all sides, across wide elm-patterned fields, there was still no sign of another house. Below us the conservatory glittered in the sun and it was even possible to see, huge and splendidly scarlet under the glass, the amaryllis staring back at us.

The Captain began to cry.

'You get up here and you'd never know the difference,' he said. His tears were simply moist negative oozings on the lids of his pink-lidded eyes. They might have been caused by the wind that up there, in the tower, was a little fresher than in the hollow below.

'Never knew it was going to pot,' he said. 'Everything. The whole damn thing.'

I felt I had to say something and I remembered the flag.

'Oh! it's simply a thing I found in an attic,' he said. 'Just looks well. It doesn't mean a thing.'

'Nothing heraldic?'

'Oh! Good God, no. Still, got to keep the flag flying.' He made an effort at a smile.

I said I had seen somewhere, in the papers, or perhaps it was a book, I could not remember where, that heraldry was simply nothing more than a survival of the fetish and the totem pole, and he said:

'Evil spirits and that sort of thing? Is that so? Damn funny.'

Again, not angrily but sadly, biting his nails, with the trembling of his lower lip that was so like the lip of a cow, he stared at the

THE FLAG

green empty beautiful fields and once again I felt all the warm sweetness of spring stream past us, stirring the green and scarlet flag, on tender lazy circles of wind.

Below us the Captain's wife and Williams came out of the greenhouse and I saw them talking beside the winking scarlet roof of glass.

'Well, you've seen everything,' the Captain said. 'We'll have another snifter before you go.'

'No, thanks. I really ought——'

'No?' he said. 'Then I'll have one for you. Eh? Good enough?'

'Good enough,' I said.

We climbed down from the tower and he came to the gate in the fields to say good-bye. Across the fields there were nearly two miles of track, with five gates to open, before you reached the road. The Captain's eyes were full of water and he had begun to bite his nails again and his face was more than ever like a florid fester in the sun.

There was no sign of his wife and as I put in the gears and let the car move away he looked suddenly very alone and he said something that, above the noise of the car, sounded like:

'Cheers. Thanks frightfully for coming. Jolly glad——'

Half a mile away, as I got out to open the first of the five field gates, I looked back. There was no sign of life at all. The Captain had gone into the house to beat it up. The greenhouse was hidden by the great cross of stone. All that moved was the cuckoo blown once again from the dying elms like a scrap of torn paper and on the tower, from which the view was so magnificent, the flag curling in the wind.

Recollections of Lytton Strachey

BY CLIVE BELL

‘**A**NYONE can see you’re a freshman, sir,’ said the head porter at the Great Gate of Trinity. He was telling me, as tactfully as he deemed necessary, that to carry an umbrella when wearing a gown was contrary to custom. To soften the snub he made a little conversation designed to show that no one need feel the worse for a bit of advice from so knowing a man, and, indicating another gowned freshman who happened to be crossing the court, observed—‘You’d never think he was a general’s son.’ The general’s son was Lytton Strachey. Though unbearded, already he had encouraged a weak brown moustache, which, with his lank dark hair, pincer eye-glasses, and long chin, added somehow to that air of flexible endlessness which was his prevailing physical characteristic. No: Lytton Strachey, at the age of twenty, did not look a head-porter’s notion of a general’s son.

Whether I made his acquaintance in Sydney-Turner’s rooms or Leonard Woolf’s or Thoby Stephen’s I cannot say, only I feel sure it was within a month of our going up. Also I think it was in our first term that we founded the Midnight Society. The date can be of interest only to those indefatigable searchers after truth who concern themselves with the small beginnings of things; but of them one or two may be glad to know that probably in the late autumn of 1899 was laid the foundation of Bloomsbury. For the six members of the Midnight Society were Saxon Sydney-Turner, Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Thoby Stephen, A. J. Robertson and myself. Robertson, after he went down, disappeared into the wilds of Liverpool and was never heard of again—by me. But the remaining five composed, when they came to London, and when the band had been reinforced and embellished by the addition of Thoby’s two sisters, Vanessa and Virginia Stephen, the nucleus of that group to which the place of meeting—the Stephens’ house in Gordon Square—was later to give a name. But this is to anticipate by five or six years. The Midnight Society, which met

at midnight because another—the X—of which some of us were members, met earlier on Saturday evenings, assembled in my rooms in the New Court, and, having strengthened itself with whisky or punch and one of those gloomy beef-steak pies which it was the fashion to order for Sunday lunch, proceeded to read aloud some such trifle as *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Cenci*, *The Return of the Druses*, *Bartholomew Fair* or *Comus*. As often as not it was dawn by the time we had done ; and sometimes we would issue forth to perambulate the courts and cloisters, halting on Hall steps to spout passages of familiar verse, each following his fancy as memory served.

Lytton read well ; and seemed to have those squeaky notes, to which his voice rose sometimes but by no means generally in conversation, under control. In Restoration comedy, at unexpected but suitable moments, they would emerge, but never in high poetical drama. He was not, however, the best reader of the company ; that honour goes to Sydney-Turner, who was also the most learned of the set. Leonard Woolf was the most passionate and poetical ; Lytton the most grown-up ; Thoby Stephen and I were deemed worldly because we smoked cigars and talked about hunting. Lytton, however, liked us the better for that.

What with sitting for a fellowship, which, by the way, he never obtained, what with one thing and another, Lytton must have lived in Cambridge, on and off, the best part of ten years. I was up for four, and a good part of my last year was spent in Paris. Thus it comes about that, when I tell stories of Lytton at Cambridge, men a little junior to me look amazed and incredulous. They think they knew him well, and so they did ; only it was in the second—the King's period—that they knew him. In the years after I went down—after 1903, that is to say—Lytton, when he was at Cambridge, more or less lived in King's ; so much so, that when, at the time of the second Post-Impressionist Exhibition (1912), a University paper published a reproduction of Henry Lamb's portrait (not the big portrait in the Tate, but a head) and below it printed 'Lytton Strachey (King's)' few seemed aware of the error. In this second period two Kingsmen, Sheppard and Keynes, were, I suppose, his closest friends, though Norton of Trinity may have been almost as intimate : students will recall that *Emminent Victorians* is dedicated to H. T. J. N. But in my time his friends were mostly in his own college : there were, beside his cronies of the Midnight Society, McLaren (the mathematician), Hawtrey and George Trevelyan (a young and ardent don, violently

radical, already marked out as a future master of Trinity) ; and of an older generation Verrall, Duff, MacTaggart. Also, of course, there was G. E. Moore, the philosopher, who at that time, and, as some maintain, ever after, was the dominant influence in all our lives. From London, with commendable regularity and a faint air of mystery, would come on Saturdays Bertrand Russell, E. M. Forster and Desmond MacCarthy : these also were friends, and I suspect they were the death of the Midnight.

The influence of Lytton while I was at Cambridge was appreciable but not great ; it was after I had gone down that it became so impressive as to leave a mark on at least three generations of undergraduates. In my time it was mainly literary. As I have said, Lytton, who had not suffered the disadvantage of a public school education, was more grown-up than the rest of us—it should be remembered that in the Midnight Society were no Etonians—and his literary taste was more adult. To be sure, he had read less English—to say nothing of Latin and Greek of which, I surmise, he knew about as much as Shakespeare—than Turner or Woolf ; but amongst newly fledged undergraduates, late sixth-form boys, he seemed to stand for culture or something like it. He had read a little French. He had admired Joachim. He had attended private views, and doted on Melville. He and I were, I believe, singular in our set, if not in the University, in that we took some interest in the visual arts. I am still surprised, and disconcerted maybe, on going into a modern don's rooms to find there a nice collection of contemporary paintings. It is so unlike the dear old days when an Arundel print or two represented the *ne plus ultra* of academic æstheticism. But Lytton and I, while still in *statu pupillari* if you please, once met by chance in the National Gallery and more than once in the Fitzwilliam. There he would bid me admire Veronese's *Semele* which he admired inordinately—for literary reasons—and about the authenticity of which I now have doubts. Also one of my earliest excursions in æsthetics must have been provoked by his query, as he contemplated the reproduction of a Degas pinned to my door—‘I wonder what the uninitiated really think about it.’

Certainly Lytton helped to stimulate that enthusiasm for the lesser Elizabethans, and for Sir Thomas Browne, which came to boiling point about the time I was leaving Cambridge ; and when at the beginning of our second year he developed a slightly affected passion for Pope he took us by surprise but he took us with him.

He was a great figure, and in a world of very young men a great figure is, I suppose, bound to be a considerable influence. In public, at meetings of clubs and societies that is to say, and at Dons' evenings, his appearances were impressive and his comments noted. I recall a meeting of the Sunday Essay Society at which Bray—one, and the most sympathetic, of the Christian intellectuals and a judge's son to boot—anxious to be fair and reasonable in a teleological argument, put it to Lytton—'I expect, Strachey, you would maintain that self-realisation was the end of existence.' To which Strachey replied: 'My dear Bray, that would certainly be the end.' That struck us as worthy of Voltaire. And it is perhaps significant that when I had the good fortune to meet in my first year Desmond MacCarthy, travelling by train from King's Cross to Cambridge, and persuade him to lunch with me next day, it was Lytton whom I at once invited as the most suitable of my friends to entertain this charming and distinguished stranger. Of course it turned out they had already met.

But mainly Lytton's influence was literary; and in those early days it could hardly have been anything else. Philosophically we were dominated by Moore, and politics we despised. Let politicians disport themselves at the Union, where such small fry looked big; we liked some of them well enough in a patronising way. Nevertheless, the outside world—by which I mean the University—must have been dimly aware of Lytton's existence, must have heard something of him and disliked what it heard, for *The Granta* devoted one of a series of humorous pieces entitled *People I have not met* to 'the Strache'—the interviewer discovering him, robed in an embroidered silk dressing-gown, reclining on a sofa, smoking scented cigarettes and sipping *crème de menthe*. The Strache, if I remember rightly, was made to close the colloquy with the cryptic utterance—'Oh virtue, virtue, life is a squiggle,' from which it would appear that his reputation was not purely literary after all. Readers of *The Granta*, I dare say, called him a 'decadent.'

Be that as it may, it was not till after I had left Cambridge and Paris and returned to London that I realised Lytton's influence was beginning to touch life at various points and at points not far from the centre. I have a few letters from this first period; mostly they are dated, and they could be placed were they not. All begin 'Dear Bell' or 'My dear Bell'; the first beginning 'Dear Clive' is of November 25th, 1906. This is a date in the history of Bloomsbury. It was at the time of my engagement to Vanessa Stephen

that we took to Christian names, and it was entirely Lytton's doing. No question here of drifting into a habit, the proposal was made formally when he came to congratulate us. The practice became general; and though perhaps it marked a change less significant than that symbolised by the introduction of the Greek dual, it has had its effect. Henceforth between friends manners were to depend on feelings rather than conventions.

I have set down in some detail these salient memories because I was one of Lytton's early friends. Friends we remained—I might say cronies—friends close enough to quarrel and make it up, but the sayings and doings of later life, when Lytton had become a public character, are matter for a biographer rather than a memorialist. Nevertheless, having recorded these *juvenilia*, I should like to say a word, or rather my word, about the writer whom I admired, but also knew intimately, and of whose art and scope I am perhaps as good a judge as another. His attitude to life was informed by that genius for good sense which is apt to express itself in what sounds like paradox to the general; and Lytton's good sense came sometimes as a shock to the early twentieth century much as Wilde's came to the 'eighties' and early 'nineties.' I remember his petrifying a party of Highland sportsmen by replying to a *Punch* artist, who, after pompously deprecating the habit of lynching negroes, had added, 'but you know what it is they lynch them for.'—'Yes, but are you sure the white women mind as much as all that?' An apology for lynching made with an air of gentlemanlike prudery, was the sort of thing that made Lytton angry. For he could be angry though he rarely lost his temper. Against the popular conception of him as a sublimely detached person sitting stroking his beard, godlike and unmoved, contemplating the fussy activities of this disintegrating ant-hill which men call Earth, I have nothing to say except that it is not true. To me it is sympathetic: it is rational; it is pretty; but it is not true. They likened him to Gibbon and Voltaire, his style owes something to both—but only from the Frenchman was he directly descended. That famous irony and that devastating sarcasm were not the fruits of an immense indifference coupled with a mild Gibbonian surprise, but sprang, like Voltaire's, from indignation. It was not because he thought of them as insects that he made so many eminent Victorians look small; but because in his heart he could not help comparing them with full-sized human beings. Lytton Strachey was no more indifferent and passionless than Voltaire himself. He might have

taken *Écrasez l'infâme* for his motto: I am not sure that he did not.¹

Like all moralists he had his standards, unlike most he kept his temper and was never self-righteous. His standards came of no wretched personal fads or conventional prejudices but were based on an acute sense of the past. It is this sense which conditions his attitude to the Victorians: for to him the Oxford of Newman and the London of Mr. Gladstone were not more real than the Paris of the Encyclopædists nor as sympathetic as the Athens of Pericles. And if you believe in the continuous identity of the race, if you believe that the human heart and brain have not contracted nor the glands dried up, if you believe that the Athenians in their passionate search for truth and their endeavour to realise their ideal were using faculties similar to those bestowed on liberals and conservatives, and if you have admired the broad grin of fatuity conferred by the scientific century on itself, why then you will have a subject for high and bitter comedy, out of which, if you happen to be Lytton Strachey, you may create a work of manifest beauty and implicit admonition.

It is legitimate to regard this humorous and witty historian, who contrives to enlighten without for a moment boring, as the descendant of Voltaire, provided you do not forget that he is at nearest great-great-grandson. Between them lie those discoveries of psychology which made it impossible for Lytton Strachey to treat life with the intellectual confidence of his ancestor. Life, he knew, was something of which the dimmest comprehension—to say nothing of the least amelioration—is more difficult than to the mind of the eighteenth century appeared its complete explanation and perfection. Overlook the fact that he defended Rousseau on the ground that Rousseau was 'a modern man,' and as such incomprehensible to his contemporaries, and you mistake inevitably his point of view. The idea that he was insensitive to that side of life for which Rousseau suffered seems fantastic to anyone who knew him well; and the notion that he misjudged the Victorian age, as the revenant he is sometimes supposed to have been must have misjudged it, is absurd. In his criticism of men, of their conduct and motives, there is no failure to appreciate or sympathise with their modernity; and the 'age of progress,' with all its good and

¹ The gist of the next few paragraphs could be found in an article I wrote for *The New Statesman* some twenty-five years ago, when Desmond MacCarthy was literary editor.

bad luck, is weighed fairly in the balance and found, by comparison with the greatest—silly.

So it is a mistake to call Lytton Strachey '*dix-huitième*.' He belongs to no particular school : all one can say is, he was of the great tradition, which does not mean that he was old-fashioned or reactionary. The tradition (as you may have heard) is a live thing, growing always, growing and spreading like a tree ; and the ape who would creep back into the trunk is as surely lost as the fool who would detach himself from the twig. Lytton was not at odds with his age ; if he could see that there was much to be said for the Whig oligarchy and the system it maintained, he could see that there was much to be said for Socialism too. In art or life or politics always it is silly to be crying for last month's moon, and even sillier to cut loose from the tradition and play at being Adam and Eve. Lytton was a good deal less silly than most of us. His attitude to life, and therefore his art, was based on a critical appreciation of the past, an interest in the present, and a sense of human possibilities—the amalgam bound together and tempered by a fine pervasive scepticism. He judged men and their doings, as he judged books, out of knowledge, sympathy and doubt ; and because he understood what human beings had achieved he was not indifferent to their fate.

Having said so much of Lytton's attitude to life, I should like to say a word about the manner in which he expressed it. Naturally not in the manner in which Voltaire did justice to *le grand siècle*, nor that in which Gibbon unrolled the doom of the Roman empire, did this modern tell his tale. His style, though like most good styles it acknowledges its ancestry, is as personal as that of any well educated author of his time. To hear some critics talk you might suppose it was precious ; whereas, in fact, Lytton was rather careless about words. Yet minute attention to words is, I take it, the essence of preciousity. In the prose of an author whose acute sense of words induces a tendency to this defect or ornament—I know not which to call it—you will generally find a concatenation of half-buried metaphors which often escapes the notice of casual readers. You will find words conditioning words by recon-dite influences : the artist having been so intensely aware of their precise and original meanings that he has felt bound to relate each to some other which recognizes the original meaning and honours the implicit association. Thus do the sentences of the more elaborate stylists tend to become a series of almost imperceptible

RECOLLECTIONS OF LYTTON STRACHEY

cognate relations ; and these relations, forced on the attention of the insensitive, tend to annoy. Let me give a glaring example : ' If anyone were so sanguine, a glance at the faces of our Conscript Fathers along the benches would soon bleed him.' Lytton Strachey would hardly have written that, though it is not to be supposed that he was less aware than Sir Max Beerbohm of the meaning of the word 'sanguine.' Similarly, anyone as sharply and incessantly conscious of the exact and original meaning of words as Sir Max would be unlikely to speak of ' this singular opinion ' when he meant this unusual and slightly ludicrous one : but Lytton does, and so, for that matter, does Gibbon.

Writing in sentences rather than words, and in paragraphs rather than sentences, Lytton comes nearer to Macaulay than to Gibbon, and is, I should say, freer, though more elaborate, than Macaulay. The paragraph is his pattern, and he a mosaicist on the grand scale, willing, I mean, to compose out of the oddest bits. To the intrinsic quality of the cube he is indifferent almost, provided it does its work : ready-made phrases, exclamatory interjections, dramatic aposiopesis and frank journalese serve his turn : and so masterly is his art that he makes all tell, a lump of broken bottle here foiling there a die of purest *lapis*. He is a master but a dangerous one to learn of. No precious author and very few careful stylists would write : ' The light thrown by the Bible upon the whole matter seemed somewhat dubious '—' the influential circles of society '—' an excellent judge of horse-flesh.' In full dress Gibbon would never have written : ' Ward forced him forward step by step towards—no ! he could not bear it ; ' nor I think would Macaulay. But Dr. Johnson himself might have observed with pleasure that, ' Dyspeptic by constitution, melancholic by temperament, he could yet be lively on occasions, and was known as a wit in Coburg.' For my part, I would change nothing in Lytton's style ; the stock phrase and the costumier's adjective used for purposes of irony and sarcasm become delicate weapons in the hand of a master : only I would observe that they are much too treacherous to be played with by girls and boys.

I have tried to indicate in a few paragraphs—and the attempt was impertinent no doubt—what was Lytton's attitude to life and how he chose to express it. To describe the effect of this attitude on the age in which he flourished will be the task of some historian, and him I would gladly help out with a few anecdotes illustrating Lytton's reforms in the matter of free speech could I recall any that

were at once significant and printable. The business ought not to be too risky seeing that what seemed downright smut to Edwardian gentility sounds conversational enough today. But either my memory or my courage fails me. Oblivion will not be cheated by my indiscreet revelations ; and, anyhow, it was through his writings that Lytton's influence was spread widely, though perhaps a trifle thin. It was felt most deeply by his friends of course, and by them maybe was most effectively disseminated. With them he created a peculiar atmosphere—an atmosphere conditioned naturally by the person he happened to be with. He was extraordinarily sympathetic and provoked confidences. Gradually he must have come to know his friends' secret thoughts about most things, including themselves. Yet there was seldom anything tense in a conversation with Lytton ; it drifted hither and thither in that pleasant atmosphere, gay, truthful (cynical if you will—the terms are interchangeable almost), amusingly and amusedly censorious. Lytton brought a literary and historical flavour into his talk so that, if the past were discussed sometimes as though it were the present, the perplexities and misfortunes of his contemporaries were treated often as though they came from the pages of St. Simon or Horace Walpole. But always there was that atmosphere, that sense of intelligent understanding mingled with affection, which induced his companion to give of his or her best in a particular way from a particular angle. I should despair of resurrecting the ghost of an idea of what I have in memory were it not that a lady, speaking of him soon after his death, let fall a melancholy but illuminating remark which seems to me to suggest the quality of his company, 'Don't you feel,' said she, 'there are things one would like to say and never will say now?' And by this she did not mean affectionate things, flattering things, things that would have shown Lytton what one felt for him or thought of him, but mere comments on life or books or art or acquaintances or historical characters, little jokes and little ironies, paradoxes that were almost true and truisms masquerading as inventions, things to which the climate would have given a peculiar relish, things that now will never come to life.

Of this peculiar quality is any taste to be found and enjoyed in his writing? Yes, I think so. Sometimes when, with demurest deference, he exposes the outrageous follies of mankind as though he were recording the fruits of profound cogitation and ripe political wisdom—as indeed he often is—one catches an echo of his voice. And sometimes, when he indulges a turn for that subtle kind of fun

which is the extension into the universal of a private joke, one fancies oneself back at Tidmarsh. The family joke, coterie humour, we know : in every school and college, in every clique and set, are sources of merriment which for the outside world do not exist. But there are writers—and in this English writers are perhaps especially happy—who can make a coterie of all the world. The esoteric joke depends, not only on common experience but on common assumptions ; and there are writers—Sterne, Charles Lamb, Byron, Peacock—who persuade us, apparently without trying, to accept theirs and divine them even. Though we have been told very little about their favourite butts, we laugh at them mercilessly because we laugh with the marksman. And already are we so much in Lytton's humour that when, on the fourth page of his essay, he remarks of Dr. Arnold that ' his legs, perhaps, were shorter than they should have been,' we know that it is all up with the head-master of Rugby.

Unless he was feeling ill, as too often he was, Lytton with his intimate friends, or with people to whom he had taken a fancy, was delightful ; but his company manners could be bad. I do not know whether it was vanity or some more recondite motive that made him unwilling to speak, or give any sign of taking an interest in the conversation, when he could not be sure of appearing as he wished to appear. Once or twice he has been with me in France, and once or twice in my flat in the company of French or French-speaking people and on such occasions he could be downright grumpy. Yet he spoke French no worse than many I have heard disporting themselves cheerfully in that language : possibly his skin was thinner than theirs. Be that as it may, in practical matters—and a party is a practical matter—Lytton was not helpful. He was something self-conscious and he was not generous. I do not mean that he was stingy, though, having been till near the end of his life rather hard up, he was always careful of his money ; I mean that he was sparing of praise, a trifle envious maybe, and disinclined to put himself out for or make himself useful to others. Assuredly, he was not inconsiderate, but I suppose he was rather selfish and a thought arrogant. He took care of number one, as my old nurse used to say, and I do not blame him.

Lytton could love, and perhaps he could hate. To anyone who knew him well it is obvious that love and lust and that mysterious mixture of the two which is the heart's desire played in his life parts of which a biographer who fails to take account will make

himself ridiculous. But I am not a biographer ; nor can, nor should, a biography of Lytton Strachey be attempted for many years to come. It cannot be attempted till his letters have been published or at any rate made accessible, and his letters should not be published till those he cared for and those who thought he cared for them are dead. Most of his papers luckily are in safe and scholarly hands. The habit of cashing in on a man's reputation while it is still warm grows apace, and—but, to avail myself of Strachean aposiopoesis, it is time to make an end.

It was towards the end of November that I came back from Venice in 1931. A day or two after my return Lytton dined with me. He was feeling ill and went away early saying, 'let us meet again very soon when I am better.' So we dined together on the following Friday and enjoyed one of those evenings which Lytton contrived to turn into works of art. Next day I went into Wiltshire, and at Paddington discovered that Lytton, with his sister Philippa and some other relations, I think, was travelling in the same coach. He came to see me in my compartment, where I was alone, and we had some talk, mostly I remember about my tussle with the Commissioners of Inland Revenue who, as usual, were behaving disagreeably. At Reading he rejoined his party. At Hungerford I watched him walk along the platform on his way out. That was the last time I saw Lytton.

Chapels on the Riviera

BY FRANCIS STEEGMULLER

CHAPELLE. 1. Chapel . . . 2 (fig.) Coterie, clique.

(*The Concise Oxford French Dictionary*)

ON the outskirts of the old town of Vence behind the French Riviera a mass of scaffolding in a suburban street hides the rising walls of a small building that has achieved fame before completion—the chapel designed by Henri Matisse, with the technical aid of architects, for the local community of Dominican nuns. It has been the subject of much advance publicity in motion picture, magazine and newspaper, and a portion of each bit of publicity has usually been an interview with Matisse or his photograph. It is the single example of a contemporary master devoting his attention to all details of an ecclesiastical structure; and as such it has been hailed as a glorious indication of the ‘renaissance of the liturgical æsthetic,’ of the ‘spiritual revolution of the twentieth century, predicted by the late George Bernanos.’ In a room of the adjacent convent, where one of the nuns discourses to visitors on a small-scale model of the chapel and accepts contributions, a guest-book already bears the signatures of pilgrims from all over the world—the faintest foretaste, it is thought, of the crowds who will visit the shrine during future years and generations.

Matisse, eighty years old and in feeble health, has for the past two years spent most of his time in his studio at Nice designing his chapel, and executing, by means of a long brush which he wields from his chair or bed, those portions which are to be actually by his hand. His preservation, despite severe illness, for the completion of his pious work, is confidently ascribed by the lecturing nun to ‘Providence’; just recently he has finished to his satisfaction (after rejecting three earlier, completely executed, series) fourteen terracotta Stations of the Cross; and he has said of himself, in one of the numerous chapel-interviews, ‘I was born with a chaotic,

tumultuous, disordered spirit. Today I have found unity, in accord with the universal harmony of creation itself.'

In the completed Matisse chapel, the light will stream through coloured, arabesque-patterned windows in one wall to illuminate, on the wall opposite, large black and white figures of the Virgin and of Saint Dominic; the altar will be placed on the bias so that the officiating priest can address at one and the same time the lay congregation in the nave and the community of nuns sitting in a transept; its Via Crucis is to be arranged not in traditional style around the walls of the church, but all on one wall, in the form of an S ascending to Calvary. Unquestionably, all those new details—each one of which has of course had to receive, and has received, the approval of the Dominican order—will make up into something that will be, as the French say, *très distingué*; and it will be interesting to see whether, in addition to its chic, the chapel will contain any trace of religious feeling.

The word 'religious' is used here in as inclusive a sense as possible, but refers particularly to the power of an artist to touch the innermost secret places of the human spirit—a power that includes and transcends the ability to please the human senses by arabesque and colour. This power has not hitherto been noticeable in the paintings of Matisse. They have owed their charm chiefly to their brilliant colour; he himself once said that he wished his pictures to cause the spectator to feel as though he were sinking into a comfortable armchair; of late years the colour has become ever thinner; and in the chapel it is to be omitted entirely except as indirectly produced by the sun streaming on to images through glass arabesques.

The chapel was Matisse's idea—'We did not ask Monsieur Matisse to make us this chapel,' the lecturing nun proudly tells her listeners; 'it was he who sought us out.'—and one cannot help wondering whether it was merely by coincidence that Matisse's offer to the Dominican sisters of Vence was made at the very moment, a few years ago, when another 'chapel' was about to be consecrated on the Riviera.

Only a few miles from Vence, in the fishing-port of Antibes (the Græco-Roman Antipolis), the local museum, known as the Musée Grimaldi, has for many years been housed in a medieval castle whose tower looks out over the ramparts and the Mediterranean shore to the snow-covered peaks of the Alpes-Maritimes—one of the most charming prospects in the world. In an upper, disused

room of this picturesque building (whose collection had long consisted of Græco-Roman inscriptions and some objects relating to Napoleon, who in 1814 landed from Elba at nearby Juan-les-Pins), Pablo Picasso was, in the mid 1940's, allowed to set up a studio, or, as he puts it more simply, to 'work'; and the world has since become familiar with the innumerable drawings and paintings of gods and goddesses, mermaids, fish, seashells, Neptunes, fauns and satyrs, men, women and children, that were the fruit of the artist's post-war working vacation beside the Mediterranean. Picasso fell in love with the old castle, and in some way it was arranged between him, the local museum authorities, and the national French *direction des musées*, that portions of the building should be remodelled to receive a permanent exhibition of Picasso's work—drawings, paintings, sculpture and ceramics. This new Musée Grimaldi was dedicated with considerable fanfare in the summer of 1948. Its spirit is very different from that of the Matisse chapel at Vence. The objects on display include an ancient marble phallus that Picasso discovered among the museum's hidden possessions and caused to be shown; and the atmosphere is a unique mixture of classical, medieval and Napoleonic past together with Picasso's present, all harmonising miraculously and beautifully amid the stones of the old town, beside the blue of the sea, and in the golden sunshine. No saint ever had dedicated to him a more beautiful or more original chapel than Picasso succeeded in having dedicated to himself in Antibes. It was about the time of the dedication of the Musée Grimaldi-Picasso that Matisse made his offer to the nuns of Vence.

So one chapel has rapidly followed another on the Riviera: the partly pagan chapel of the former Cubist, whose work has always shown such variety and continues to be unpredictable; and the orthodox chapel of the former Fauve who has now 'found unity,' and who, spared by Providence to complete his role in our contemporary 'spiritual revolution,' has known how to make of it an occasion for personal publicity rivalling that of Picasso.

Ruskin was accustomed to assess fearlessly the religiosity, even the personal religiosity of the various artists with whom he dealt: contrasting, for example, the spirit of Cimabue, Giotto and Fra Angelico with that of Ghirlandaio, contrasting the types of life led by the different painters, and pointing an accusing finger at the theatricality which in his opinion took the place of piety in Bernini, Borromini, and other late Renaissance adorners of churches. We



PABLO PICASSO

Man with a sheep (plaster)



HENRI MATISSE

Anémones et femme, harmonie bleue (1937)

should be inclined to find grotesque any such discussion as to the comparative religiosity of Matisse and Picasso ; and yet for at least two reasons it is tempting to try to see in the adjacent work of these two men on the Riviera some indication of the comparative 'religious' content of their art—the word 'religious' again being used in the broad sense given to it above. For one thing, there is the great division of loyalty, among lovers of modern art, between the art that has come down to us from Cubism—for example the present-day production of Picasso and Villon (both former Cubists) and of the innumerable younger men of all nationalities who work in abstract or semi-abstract forms—and the art that has come from the Fauves : Matisse, Derain, Dufy, and the host of older and younger Expressionists. And secondly, many persons who at this particular moment of our age's 'spiritual revolution'—i.e. Holy Year, 1950—visit the two chapels on the Riviera, come to them after a visit to Rome, where they have seen religion in all its aspects : sincere piety that is combined with tolerance ; superstition and victimisation in their grossest forms (the purchase of splinters of saints' bones remains common among twentieth-century pilgrims) ; fashion ; big business ; and politics, as evidenced in the church's important voice in Italian governmental decisions. Many of those who have been to Rome will naturally consider the Matisse Chapel, with its Madonna and Saint Dominic and Stations of the Cross, the true present-day descendant of the catacombs and the Holy Year basilicas.

But quite a different impression is likely to be carried away by those visitors to the Riviera who enter not only the two chapels which we have described, but also a third : for (it is impossible not to smile) already, before the Matisse chapel is even completed, there is a third, and it belongs to Picasso.

During the years since he first began to work in the upper room of the Musée Grimaldi, Picasso has spent much time at Vallauris, a small town just inland from Antibes and famous for its potter's clay. Here he now has studios for sculpture and painting, and here he makes his famous ceramics. Recently he presented to the town of Vallauris, to be erected in one of the public squares, a bronze cast of a sculpture which he executed a few years ago: *Man Carrying a Sheep*, a simple, naturalistic, nearly life-size figure of a bearded shepherd, bearing a sheep in his arms. And, perhaps in return for this gift (the precise circumstances have not been divulged), but in any case at a moment when the fame of the

Matisse chapel is spreading widely, the municipal authorities of Vallauris have put at Picasso's disposition, to do with as he likes, an old chapel. It is small, bare, utterly unadorned ; but it is of fine proportions, Romanesque design and warmly coloured stone ; it opens off another of Vallauris's small public squares ; and as befits Picasso the ' Communist ' (though one hears little of his Communism these days) it has not been used for ecclesiastical purposes since it was disaffected at the time of the French Revolution and turned into a mill for the making of olive oil. The great stone implements are still there ; standing upright in a trough hewn out of solid rock is the mill-stone, like a rising sun. In this chapel, until the town square is ready, Picasso has temporarily placed his *Man Carrying a Sheep* ; and so perfectly, it happens, does the one fit the other that a visit to this place is an experience that is religious whether the word be used broadly or narrowly. Lit by small windows high in the old walls, the bronze figure beneath the stone vaults is like a figure from a catacomb fresco, or from an early Christian mosaic, suddenly made round ; or it is like some rough, touching John the Baptist of the very late Verrocchio, shaggy and intensely moving. Gazing at it, one thinks with the greatest gratitude back over the half-century of Picasso's work : the sombre figures of the blue period and the pink, the fine etchings of Salome's dance and of the acrobats, then the Cubism, and the *Three Musicians*, the illustrations for the *Metamorphoses*, the disquieting Mars-like work of the war years, the joyful outburst of the Antibes production, and now this shepherd in his chapel—all of it bearing the mark of a spirit which was truly born, as Matisse describes his own, ' chaotic, tumultuous, disordered,' but which, unlike Matisse's, does not—or at least not yet—claim to have ' found unity ' in the approval of some authority, whether Dominican or Communist.

So beautiful is the statue in the Vallauris chapel that one hopes it may be left there ; placed in an open square, its effect would certainly be lessened ; and in the chapel, while it might never attract such hosts of visitors as the orthodox shrine at Venice, it would be the recipient of many an intense and pious pilgrimage such as is paid, for example, to Michelangelo's unfinished, lesser-known Pieta in its isolated chapel in the Florence Duomo.

A few hundred yards away from his new chapel, in his sculpture studio, Picasso is at present completing a large plaster figure of a she-goat, which is also to be cast in bronze. Without the frame of a chapel, without the presence of a human form, the goat already

possesses the same uncanny power to twist the human heart that is present in the shepherd—that power which we shall hope to find in Matisse's Madonna, Saint Dominic, and Stations of the Cross.

[*Author's Note.*—Since the writing of this article, Picasso's statue of the 'Man Carrying a Sheep' has indeed been removed from its chapel and installed in one of the public squares of Vallauris. An artistic mistake: let us hope that it may be corrected.]

After Reading Burke

BY W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

I AM the happy possessor of the complete works of Hazlitt and from time to time I take a volume from my shelves and read an essay here, an essay there, as my inclination prompts. I am seldom disappointed. Like every writer he is not always at his best, which is very good indeed, but even at his worst (with the exception of the *Liber Amoris*) he is readable. He is amusing, bitter, keen-witted, violent, sympathetic, unjust, generous; he scarcely ever wrote a page in which he does not give you himself, with his faults and his virtues, and that in the end is all an author has to give. The assiduous reader of Hazlitt cannot fail to notice how often the name of Edmund Burke appears in his pages. It never ceases to give me a little thrill when I find him referred to as 'the late Mr. Burke'; the hundred and fifty years that have passed since his death seem then to be no great matter and I feel that he was, if not a contemporary of my own, someone whom if I had been fortunate I might have known in my youth as, for example, I might have known George Meredith or Swinburne. Hazlitt was of opinion that Burke was the first prose writer of his time and in one of his essays states that at one period of his life his three favourite writers were Burke, Junius and Rousseau. 'I was never weary,' he says, 'of admiring and wondering at the felicities of the style, the turns of expression, the refinements of thought and sentiment: I laid the book down to find out the secret of so much strength and beauty, and took it up again in despair, to read on and admire.' In passage after passage Hazlitt praises Burke's style and it is evident that his own owes a good deal to his study of it. He describes him as, with the exception of Jeremy Taylor, the most poetical of prose writers. 'It has always appeared to me,' he says, 'that the most perfect prose-style, the most powerful, the most dazzling, the most daring, that which went the nearest to the verge of poetry and yet never fell over, was Burke's. It has the solidity and the sparkling effect of the diamond . . . Burke's style is airy, flighty, adventurous, but it never loses sight of the subject; nay,

is always in contact with, and derives its increased and varying impulse from it.' And again : ' His style has all the familiarity of conversation, and all the research of the most elaborate conversation. He says what he wants to say, by any means, nearer or more remote within his reach. He makes use of the most common or scientific terms, of the longest or shortest sentences, of the plainest and most downright, or of the most figurative modes of speech. . . . He everywhere gives the image he wishes to give, in its true and appropriate colouring ; and it is the very crowd and variety of these images that have given his language its peculiar tone of animation and even of passion. It is his impatience to transfer his conceptions entire, living, in all their rapidity, strength and glancing variety—to the minds of others, that constantly pushes him to the verge of extravagance, and yet supports him there in dignified security.'

This, and other passages too numerous or too long to cite, so much impressed me that I thought I should like to see for myself what justification there was for praise so unqualified. I had not read Burke since I was very young ; I read then *On Conciliation with the Colonies* and *On the Affairs with America* ; perhaps owing to my youth I did not find the matter very interesting, but I was deeply affected by the manner and I retained the recollection, vivid though vague, of a splendid magniloquence. I have now read these speeches once more, and the more important writings of Burke besides, and in the following pages I wish to submit to the reader the reflections that have occurred to me. I hasten, however, to tell him that I do not propose to deal with Burke's thought ; for that it would be necessary to have a much greater knowledge of the eighteenth century than I can claim and an interest in, and a familiarity with, the principles of politics which I must admit (and it may be I should admit with shame) I am far from possessing. I desire to treat only of the manner in which Burke wrote without paying any more attention than can be helped to the matter of which he wrote. It is evident that the two can never be entirely separated, for style must be conditioned by the subject of discourse ; a grave, balanced and deliberate manner befits an important theme, but has a grotesque effect when it is applied to a trivial one : contrariwise a gay, sparkling way of writing is ill suited to those great topics of which Dr. Johnson remarked that you could no longer say anything new about them that was true or anything true about them that was new. But if writers must continue to

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speak of them they err when they try to excite our interest by jumping through verbal hoops and turning paradoxical somersaults. One of the difficulties that the novelist has to cope with is that his style must change with his matter and if he tries to keep it uniform he will find it hard to avoid an impression of artificiality ; for he must be colloquial when he reports dialogue, rapid when he narrates action, and restrained or impassioned (according to his idiosyncrasy) when he describes emotion. But perhaps it is enough if the novelist contents himself with avoiding the grosser errors of grammar, for no one can have considered this matter without being struck by the significant and surprising fact that the four greatest novelists the world has seen, Tolstoi, Balzac, Dostoevski and Dickens, wrote their respective languages very carelessly ; and Dickens, as we know, did not even take the trouble to write tolerable grammar. It is for the historian, the divine and the essayist to acquire and maintain a settled style and it is no accident that in this country the most splendid monuments of the English language have been produced by such essayists as Sir Thomas Browne, Dryden, Addison and Johnson (for *Rasselas*, though purposing to be a work of fiction is in effect an essay on the vanity of human wishes), by such divines as Jeremy Taylor and William Law, and by such historians as Gibbon. Among these Edmund Burke holds an eminent place.

Hazlitt says that he had tried half a dozen times to describe Burke's style without succeeding, and it may seem presumptuous in me to attempt something that Hazlitt failed to do ; but, in fact, in various of his essays he has given so good a description of it that there is really nothing left to add. He takes note of its severe extravagance ; its literal boldness ; its matter-of-fact hyperbole, its running away with a subject, and from it at the same time ; and then he adds, ' but there is no making it out, for there is no example of the same thing anywhere else. We have no common measure to refer to ; and his qualities contradict even themselves.' My object is not to describe Burke's style, but to examine its texture and to discover, if I can, the methods he employed by means of words to produce his effects. Hazlitt has set forth the rich succulence of the dish ; my aim is to ferret out the ingredients that give it savour. I am concerned to find out how he constructed his sentences and how he ordered his paragraphs, what use he made of abstract and concrete words, of image and metaphor, and of what rhetorical devices he availed himself to serve his turn ; and if this seems a dull subject, after all no one is under an obligation

to read the following pages. To me, a writer, it is an interesting one. But I am confronted with two difficulties: the first is that I am none too confident of my capacity to deal with this somewhat ambitious task; the second is that I can only hope to achieve a measure of success by giving quotations, and these I believe only the most conscientious readers can resist the temptation to skip. Yet it is only by example that I can indicate practice. English is a difficult language to write, and few authors have written it consistently with accuracy and distinction. The best way of learning to do this is to study the great masters of the past. Much of what Burke wrote has no longer, except perhaps to the politician, a pressing interest; indeed, I believe that almost all that he has to say of value to the average reader now could be put into one volume of elegant extracts; and for my part I must confess that I could never have brought myself to read his voluminous works with such care if I had not hoped to gain something from them that would enable me to write more nearly as I wish to. The manner of writing changes with the fleeting generations and it would be absurd to try to write now like one of the great stylists of the eighteenth century, but I see no reason to suppose that they have not something to teach us that may be to our purpose. The language of literature maintains its vitality by absorbing the current speech of the people; this gives it colour, vividness and actuality; but if it is to avoid shapelessness and incoherence it must be founded on, and determined by, the standards of the period when English prose attained the highest degree of perfection of which it seems capable.

I think there are few writers who write well by nature. Burke was a man of prodigious industry and it is certain that he took pains not only over the matter of his discourse, but over the manner. 'With respect to his facility of composition,' says Hazlitt, 'there are contrary accounts. It has been stated by some that he wrote out a plain sketch first, like a sort of dead colouring, and added the ornaments and tropes afterwards. I have been assured by a person who had the best means of knowing, that the *Letter to a Noble Lord* (the most rapid, impetuous, glancing and sportive of all his works) was printed off, and the proof sent to him: and that it was returned to the printing-office with so many alterations and passages interlined, that the compositors refused to correct it as it was—took the whole matter in pieces, and re-set the copy. This looks like elaboration and afterthought.' And we learn from Dodsley that more than

a dozen revises of the *Reflections on the French Revolution* were taken off and destroyed before the author could satisfy himself. A glance at the *Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* is enough to show that Burke's style was the result of labour. Though this work, praised by Johnson, turned to account by Lessing and esteemed by Kant, cannot now be read with great profit it can still afford entertainment. In arguing that perfection is not the cause of beauty, he asserts: 'Women are very sensible of this; for which reason they learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness. In all this they are guided by nature. Beauty in distress is much the most affecting beauty. Blushing has little less power; and modesty in general, which is a tacit allowance of imperfection, is itself considered as an amiable quality, and certainly heightens every other that is so. I know it is in everybody's mouth, that we ought to love perfection. This is to me a sufficient proof that it is not the proper object of love.' Here is another quotation: 'When we have before us such objects as excite love and complacency: the body is affected so far as I could observe, much in the following manner: The head reclines something on one side, the eye-lids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object; the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly, with now and then a long sigh; the whole body is composed, and the hands fall idly to the sides.' This book is supposed to have been first written when Burke was nineteen and it was published when he was twenty-six. I have given these quotations to show the style in which he wrote before he submitted to the influence which enabled him to become one of the masters of English prose. It is the general manner of the middle of the eighteenth century and I doubt whether anyone who read these passages would know who was the author. It is correct, easy and flowing; it shows that Burke had by nature a good ear. English is a language of harsh consonants, and skill is needed to avoid the juxtaposition of sounds that offend the hearing. Some authors are insensible to this and will use a word ending with a consonant, or even a pair of them, and put beside it a word beginning with the same one or the same pair (a fast stream); they will use alliteration (always dangerous in prose) and will write words that rhyme (thus producing an unpleasant jingle) without any feeling of discomfort. Of course the sense is the first thing, but the riches of the English language are such that it is seldom a sufficiently exact synonym cannot be found for the word that comes first to mind. It is

seldom that an author is obliged to let something stand that grates upon his ear because only so can he say precisely what he wants to. One of the most valuable things that can be learnt from Burke is that, however unmanageable certain words may appear, it is possible by proper placing, the judicious admixture of long ones with short, by alternation of consonants and vowels and by alternation of accent, to secure euphony. Of course no one could write at all if he bore these considerations in his conscious mind; the ear does the work. In Burke's case I think it evident that the natural sensibility of the organ was infinitely developed by the exigencies of public speech: even when he wrote only to be read the sound of the spoken phrase was present to him. He was not a melodious writer as Jeremy Taylor was in the seventeenth century or Newman in the nineteenth; his prose has force, vitality and speed rather than beauty; but notwithstanding the intricate complication of many of his sentences they remain easy to say and good to hear. I have no doubt that at times Burke wrote a string of words that was neither and in the tumult of his passion broke the simple rules of euphony which I have indicated. An author has the right to be judged by his best.

I have read somewhere that Burke learnt to write by studying Spenser and it appears that many of his gorgeous sentences and poetical allusions can be traced to the poet. He himself said that: 'Whoever relishes and reads Spenser as he ought to be read, will have a strong hold of the English language.' I do not see what he can have acquired from that mellifluous, but (to my mind) tedious bard other than that sense of splendid sound of which I have just been speaking. He was certainly never influenced by the excessive use of alliteration which (again to my mind) makes the *Faerie Queene* cloying and sometimes even absurd. It has been said, among others by Charles James Fox who should have known, that Burke founded his style on Milton's. I cannot believe it. It is true that he often quoted him and it would be strange indeed if with his appreciation of fine language Burke had failed to be impressed by the magnificence of vocabulary and grandeur of phrase in *Paradise Lost*; but the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* on which, such as it is, the evidence for the statement rests were written in old age: it seems improbable that if Burke had really studied Milton's prose for the purpose of forming his own its influence should not have been apparent till he had one foot in the grave. Nor can I believe, as the *Dictionary of National Biography* asserts,

that he founded it on Dryden's. I see in Burke's deliberate, ordered and resonant prose no trace of Dryden's charming grace and happy-go-lucky facility. There is all the difference that there is between a French garden of trim walks and ordered parterres and a Thames-side park with its coppices and its green meadows. For my part I think it more likely that the special character of Burke's settled manner must be ascribed to the robust and irresistible example of Dr. Johnson. I think it was from him that Burke learnt the value of a long intricate sentence, the potent force of polysyllabic words, the rhetorical effect of balance and the epigrammatic elegance of antithesis. He avoided Johnson's faults (small faults to those who like myself have a peculiar fondness for Johnson's style) by virtue of his affluent and impetuous fancy and his practice of public speaking.

II

We all know Buffon's dictum that : *Le style c'est l'homme même*. If it is true then by making yourself acquainted with the man it should be possible to come to a better understanding of his style. But is it true? I think Buffon thought men more of a piece than they really are. They are for the most part an amalgam of virtues and vices, of strengths and weaknesses so incompatible that it is only because they are manifest that you can believe it possible for them to coexist in one and the same person. Burke was much discussed in his day, passionately praised by some, violently decried by others, and from the various reports that have come down to us, from Hazlitt's essays and the excellent life of Sir Philip Magnus, it is possible, I think, to get a fairly accurate impression of the kind of man he was. But it is not a plausible one. It is with difficulty that you can persuade yourself to believe that merits so rare can go hand-in-hand with defects so deplorable. You are left utterly perplexed.

Edmund Burke was born in Ireland, in 1729, the son of an attorney, a profession then held in small respect : Johnson once remarked of someone who had quitted the company that 'he did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but he believed the gentleman was an *attorney*.' When just over twenty Burke went to London to study law and soon after his arrival formed a close friendship with a certain William Burke who, if a relation at all, was a very distant one. He soon abandoned the law for literature and for some years made his living as best he could by writing for

the booksellers. He published a couple of books which appear to have attracted sufficient attention to secure him the acquaintance of Horace Walpole and the warm friendship of Dr. Johnson. He married in 1757 and the same year his younger brother Richard joined him in London. The three Burkes were devoted to one another; William and Richard lived with Edmund and his wife, and they shared a common purse. Richard was a noisy, exuberant, disreputable fellow without, as far as one can tell, any redeeming qualities; but William was able and pushing. He had made useful friends at Oxford and when in 1765 Lord Rockingham was called upon by the King to form a ministry he persuaded him to offer Edmund the post of his private secretary and got Lord Verney to give him one of the pocket boroughs at his disposal.

Burke immediately made his mark in the House of Commons. Dr. Johnson wrote to Bennet Langton that he had 'gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder.' The ministry fell in 1766 and two years later Burke bought a house called Gregories with an estate of six hundred acres at Beaconsfield. It is natural enough that he should have wished to do this. His reputation was great and he had a well justified confidence in his ability. We may suppose that his lofty spirit, his impetuous exuberance, made it irksome to him to live meanly. He was a sociable creature and loved to entertain his friends. It was a pleasure to him to succour deserving (and often undeserving) talent and to relieve the necessities of the needy. His origins were modest and such were the manners of the time it may be that he was often twitted with them. He lived in the company of the great; he was used by his party and knew himself to be invaluable, but he could not be unaware that he was regarded with suspicion; he was with them, but not of them, and there hung about him the taint of the Irish adventurer. And that of course is exactly what he was; he happened to be also a man of high principle, brilliant gifts, social and intellectual, and wide knowledge. It may well be that he thought that the acquisition of Gregories, by giving him a stake in the country, would add to his prestige and, by enabling him to meet these lords and gentlemen on a more equal footing, increase the influence on them which till then he had owed only to his talents.

The estate cost twenty thousand pounds and twenty-five hundred

a year to keep up. It seemed strange that a man who a few years before had been glad to accept from Dodsley, the bookseller, a hundred pounds a year to do hackwork could think of disbursing so large a sum and be prepared to burden himself with an expense so great. The Burkes, with Lord Verney to back them, were engaged in vast gambling transactions in East India Stock and they seem to have bought Gregories on the profits they had made ; but then, unfortunately for them, the stock fell heavily, they were unable to meet their differences, and in the end Lord Verney was ruined and William Burke fled the country. Edmund, involved in financial difficulties which harassed him to the end of his life, was obliged to mortgage the property ' up to the hilt ' and borrow money from his friends. The year he bought Gregories he borrowed a thousand pounds from David Garrick, and at some later date two thousand more from Sir Joshua Reynolds. During the seventeen years of his connection with Rockingham he received from him loans amounting to thirty thousand pounds. Now it is a common experience that when sums of money of any extent have passed from one person to another there arises a constraint between them that often results in coldness. In Burke's case, such was the esteem in which his friends held him, nothing of the sort happened. They revered his ' private virtues and transcendant worth,' and it may be supposed that, like Dr. Brocklesby who made him a present of a thousand pounds, they gave him the money he so badly needed as proof of their devotion. When Rockingham died he left instructions that Burke's bonds should be destroyed. Reynolds did the same thing and left him a couple of thousand pounds besides.

Burke was a proud man, sensitive of his honour, and one asks oneself if he did not feel it a humiliation to apply to his friends for money. It seems never to have occurred to him that he could very well sell Gregories and by paying his debts extricate himself from a situation that was not only mortifying but damaging to his reputation. One can only suppose that he looked upon it as an asset of such consequence that it must be retained at whatever cost to his dignity. And of course it is only a surmise that he looked upon the situation as mortifying. Borrowing, as we know, is a habit easy to contract, hard to break, and the habitual borrower soon finds a way to satisfy his need and retain his self-respect.

Burke had the insouciance which is generally considered a characteristic of the Irish in money matters, and he had also their

generous warm-heartedness. However hard pressed, he continued to give financial aid to those who enlisted his sympathies. There was an Irish painter, James Barry by name, whom he mistakenly thought a genius and to whom he gave an income so that he might study in Italy. Crabbe, the poet, was destitute; the applications he had made to one distinguished person and another for help went unanswered and as a last resource he applied to Burke. Burke installed him at Gregories and never rested till he saw him comfortably settled for life. These are only two instances of his constant benefactions. Few people came in contact with him without growing conscious of his greatness. It is remarkable how often one comes across references to the veneration with which he was regarded; so frequent are they that I have asked myself whether the word had then a slightly different connotation from what it has now. I have respect and admiration for the statesmen, generals and admirals who conducted affairs during the last war. I esteem the great gifts of the poets and novelists with whom it has been my good fortune to be acquainted, but it has never occurred to me, nor, I imagine, to anybody else, to look upon them with veneration. Perhaps we no longer possess the faculty of doing so. Burke had charm, and until worry and disappointment soured him a genial temper. He was a great talker, and as we know Dr. Johnson valued him for the 'affluence of his conversation.' I have asked myself how this would please us at the present day. It is hard to avoid the impression that we should find it a trifle heavy, for it appears to have been devastatingly informative, and we are inclined to be impatient of being told what we can read for ourselves, if not in a book, in the newspapers. We are no better listeners than was Burke himself (Johnson complained that: 'So desirous is he to talk that if one is speaking at one end of the table, he'll speak to somebody at the other end'), and we are restless of a talker who monopolises the conversation. And Burke had neither wit nor humour. It is possible that we should think him something of a bore, and I am afraid that, notwithstanding the commanding air and fine presence that impressed Fanny Burney, we should prefer to his eloquence the spritely flippancy of Miss Austen's Henry Tilney.

After the crash of East India Stock, Richard Burke, who by Edmund's influence had some years before been appointed Receiver-General of His Majesty's revenues in the West India island of Granada, returned to his post. He bought for next door to

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nothing from the Red Caribbees, descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the neighbouring island of St. Vincent, a great tract of land which was estimated to be worth a hundred thousand pounds. The transaction was so disreputable that the Council of St. Vincent refused to admit its legality. The Burkes were by this time in desperate straits and Edmund made every effort to have his brother's claim substantiated. He offered Fox, himself badly in need of money, a share of the swag if he could induce Lord North, then in office, to rule that the purchase was valid. Fox tried, and Lord North was apparently prepared to oblige, but he bungled the matter and Richard, defeated, returned to England. He was then charged with misappropriating ten thousand pounds of His Majesty's revenues, tried and found guilty. He appealed. Burke used his influence to have the appeal indefinitely postponed. One would think that had he been convinced of his brother's innocence he would have been glad to see it proved. William Burke, on leaving England to escape being arrested for debt, went to India, and there, again by Edmund's interest, he was appointed Paymaster of the King's Troops. He engaged in a variety of shady enterprises, from one of which he expected to net a hundred and fifty thousand pounds and which Sir Philip Magnus describes as flagrantly dishonest. When, utterly discredited, he was obliged to return to England he was in danger of being arrested for embezzlement. A pretty pair!

Much of this dirty business was not known till Sir Philip examined the papers at Wentworth Woodhouse, but enough leaked out gravely to discredit Edmund. Dr. Johnson was a shrewd judge of character and he retained his affection for him till his death. He valued Burke's intelligence, his knowledge, his amiability and his benevolence, but there are passages in Boswell which suggest that even he doubted his honesty. It is true that during the eighteenth century it was an understood thing that they who served the State had the right to live on it. But Burke was a moralist and a reformer. He prided himself on his high principles and yet could use his power to get men appointed to lucrative offices for which they were notoriously unfitted. He prided himself on his veracity and yet could untruthfully make a public declaration that he had never had dealings in East India Stock. He consistently fought injustice and corruption, and yet strained every nerve to further the corrupt and unjust chicaneries of William and Richard. Burke was a great orator; it was difficult to

reconcile his admirable precepts with his reprehensible practice and it is no wonder that people said he was a humbug and a hypocrite. I don't think he was. He had to an extreme degree the failing, common to most men, and one to which politicians are not immune, of believing what it was to his interest to believe. He would not look at what he did not want to see. I don't know what name to give to this failing, but neither hypocrisy nor humbug is the right one. When Burke's affections were engaged his judgement was vitiated. It was the misfortune of his life that his most engaging trait, his power of affection, should have had such unhappy consequences. William and Richard were a pair of crooks, and not even clever crooks, for not one of their nefarious schemes succeeded; yet Edmund could write: 'Looking back to the course of my life I remember no one considerable merit in the whole course of it which I did not, mediately or immediately, derive from William Burke.' And of Richard he wrote that his integrity was such that no temptation could corrupt it. He loved them both to the end and, incredible as it may seem, respected them. In his eyes they could do no wrong and so, no matter how damning was the evidence against them, he disbelieved it.

'If a man were to go by chance at the same time with Burke under a shed, to shun a shower,' said Dr. Johnson, 'he would say—"this is an extraordinary man."' Burke was extraordinary in more ways than Johnson knew. It is not often that you come across a man the features of whose personality are so incompatible as was the case with Burke. He was upright and abject, straightforward and shifty, disinterested and corrupt. How is one to reconcile characteristic so discordant? I don't know. But let us not be censorious. Did not Becky Sharp say that it was easy to be good on five thousand a year? If Burke had been born a gentleman with a fine estate and an ample income his conduct would doubtless have been as irreproachable as he was invariably convinced it was. About that, the propriety of his conduct, he never had a doubt and he looked upon the obloquy (his own word) with which he was pursued as a shameful injustice. Machiavelli has told us that when he retired to his study to write he discarded his country clothes and donned the damask robe in which as Secretary of the Republic he was wont to appear before the Signoria. So, in spirit, did Burke. In his study he was no longer the reckless punter, the shameless sponge, the unscrupulous place-hunter (not for himself, but for others), the dishonest advocate

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who attacked measures introduced to correct scandalous abuses because his pocket would be affected by their passage. In his study he was the high-minded man whom his friends loved and honoured for his nobility of spirit, his greatness and his magnanimity. In his study he was the honest man he was assured he was. Then, but only then, you can say of Burke : *Le style, c'est l'homme même.*

III

His style, it must be obvious, is solidly based on balance. Hazlitt stated that it was Dryden who first used balance in the formation of his sentences. That seems an odd thing to say since one would have thought that balance came naturally to anyone who added two sentences together by a copulative : there is balance of a sort when you say, 'he went out for a walk and came home wet through.' Dr. Johnson on the other hand, speaking of Dryden's prose, said : 'The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled : every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls in its proper place.' Thus do authorities disagree. Burke was much addicted to what for want of a better word I will call the triad ; by this I mean the juxtaposition of three nouns, three adjectives, three clauses to reinforce a point. Here are some examples : 'Never was cause supported with more constancy, more activity, more spirit.'—'Shall there be no reserve power in the Empire, to supply a deficiency which may weaken, divide or dissipate the whole?'—'Their wishes ought to have great weight with him ; their opinion, high respect ; their business, unremitted attention.'—'I really think that for wise men this is not judicious ; for sober men, not decent ; for minds tinctured with humanity, not mild or merciful.' Burke had recourse to this pattern so often that in the end it falls somewhat monotonously on the ear. It has another disadvantage, more noticeable perhaps when read than when heard, that one member of the triad may be so nearly synonymous with another that you cannot but realise that it has been introduced for its sound rather than for its sense.

Burke made frequent use of the antithesis, which of course is merely a variety of balance. Hazlitt says it is first found in *The Tatler*. I have discovered no marked proof of this in an examination which I admit was cursory ; there are traces of it, may be, but adumbrations rather than definite instances. You can find more striking examples in the *Book of Proverbs*. I hazard the guess that it

was from this and from his reading of the Latin writers that Johnson developed a device which he made his own. He perfected the form and by his authority gave it a long-continued vogue. The grammars tell us that the antithesis is a mode of structure in which two clauses of a compound sentence are made similar in form, but if this is correct then we must allow two forms of antithesis, the open and the disguised. The open emphasises a contrast, the disguised a balance. Here is an example of an open antithesis: 'The doctor recollected that he had a place to preserve, though he forgot that he had a reputation to lose'; and here is what might be described as a disguised one: 'But if fortune should be as powerful over fame, as she has been prevalent over virtue, at least our conscience is beyond her jurisdiction.'

The antithetical style is vastly effective, and if it has gone out of common use it is doubtless for a reason that Johnson himself suggested. Its purpose is by the balance of words to accentuate the balance of thought, and when it serves merely to tickle the ear it is tiresome. Oddly enough it is just on this account that Coleridge, comparing Johnson's use of it with that of Junius, condemned Johnson: 'the antithesis of Junius,' he said, 'is a real antithesis of images or thought; but the antithesis of Johnson is rarely more than verbal.' It became a trick of phraseology, and with Macaulay, who was the last writer of eminence to practise it, an exasperating trick. It is perhaps a pity that it has gone so completely out of fashion, for it had vigour and cogency. It hit the nail on the head with precision.

The master of the antithesis is the author of the *Letters of Junius*. He wrote admirably. Coleridge, it is true, claimed that when he wrote a sentence of five or six lines long nothing could exceed the slovenliness of his style, a fact which I must confess I have not noticed, but Hazlitt not only admired it, he learnt from it. I will quote the last passage of the letter he addressed to the Duke of Bedford. It is a very good sample of his manner.

'It is in vain therefore to shift the scene. You can no more fly from your enemies than from yourself. Persecuted abroad, you look into your own heart for consolation, and find nothing but reproaches and despair. But, my Lord, you may quit the field of business, though not the field of danger; and though you cannot be safe, you may cease to be ridiculous. I fear you have listened too long to the advice of those pernicious friends, with whose interests you have sordidly united your own, and for whom

you have sacrificed everything that ought to be dear to a man of honour. They are still base enough to encourage the follies of your age, as they once did the vices of your youth. As little acquainted with the rules of decorum, as with the laws of morality, they will not suffer you to profit by experience, nor even to consult the propriety of a bad character. Even now they tell you that life is no more than a dramatic scene, in which the hero should preserve his constancy to the last, and that as you lived without virtue you should die without repentance.'

Now, the vogue of the antithesis had a marked effect on sentence structure, as anyone can see for himself by comparing the prose of Dryden, for example, with that of Burke. It brought into prominence the value of the period. I may remind the reader that a period is a sentence in which the sense is held up until the end : when a clause is added after a natural close the sentence is described as loose. The English language does not allow of the inversions which make it possible to suspend the meaning and so the loose sentence is common. To this is largely due the diffusiveness of our prose. When once the unity of a sentence is abandoned there is little to prevent the writer from adding clause to clause. The antithetical structure was advantageous to the cultivation of the classical period, for it is obvious that its verbal merit depends on its compact and rounded form. I will quote a sentence of Burke's.

'Indeed, when I consider the face of the kingdom of France ; the multitude and opulence of her cities ; the useful magnificence of her spacious high roads and bridges ; the opportunity of her artificial canals and navigations opening the conveniences of maritime communication through a solid continent of so immense an extent ; when I turn my eyes to the stupendous works of her ports and harbours, and to her whole naval apparatus, whether for war or trade ; when I bring before my view the number of her fortifications, constructed with so bold and masterly a skill, and made and maintained at so prodigious a charge, presenting an armed front and impenetrable barrier to her enemies upon every side ; when I recollect how very small a part of that extensive region is without cultivation, and to what complete perfection the culture of many of the best productions of the earth have been brought in France ; when I reflect on the excellence of her manufactures and fabrics, second to none but ours, and in some particulars not second ; when I contemplate the grand foundations of charity public and private ; when I survey the state of all the arts that

beautify and polish life ; when I reckon the man she has bred for extending her fame in war, her able statesmen, the multitude of her profound lawyers and theologians, her philosophers, her critics, her historians and antiquaries, her poets and her orators, sacred and profane ; I behold in all this something which awes and commands the imagination, which checks the mind on the brink of precipitate and indiscriminate censure, and which demands that we should very seriously examine, what and how great are the latent vices that could authorise us at once to level so spacious a fabric with the ground.'

The paragraph ends with three short sentences.

I should like to point out with what skill Burke has given a ' loose ' structure to his string of subordinate clauses, thus further suspending the meaning till he brings his period to a close. Johnson, as we know, was apt to make periods of his subordinate clauses, writing what, I think, the grammarians call an extended complex, and so lost the flowing urgency which is characteristic of Burke. I should like to point out also what a happy effect Burke has secured in this compound sentence by forming his different clauses on the same plan and yet by varying cadence and arrangement avoiding monotony. He used the method of starting successive clauses with the same word, in this case with the word *when*, frequently and with effectiveness. It is of course a rhetorical device, which when used in a speech must have had a cumulative force, and shows once more how much his style was influenced by the practice of public speaking. I do not know that there is anyone in England who is capable now of writing such a sentence ; perhaps there is no one who wants to ; for, perhaps, from an instinctive desire to avoid the ' loose ' sentences which the idiosyncrasy of the language renders so inviting, it is the fashion these days to write short sentences. Indeed not long ago I read that the editor of an important newspaper had insisted that none of his contributors should write a sentence of more than fourteen words. Yet the long sentence has advantages. It gives you room to develop your meaning, opportunity to constitute your cadence and material to achieve your climax. Its disadvantages are that it may be diffuse, flaccid, crabbed or inapprehensible. The stylists of the seventeenth century wrote sentences of great length and did not always escape these defects. Burke seldom failed, however long his sentence, however elaborate its clauses and opulent his ' tropes,' to make its fundamental structure so solid that you seem to be led to the safety of the full stop by a guide

who knows his business and will permit you neither to take a side-turning nor to loiter by the way. Burke was careful to vary the length of his sentences. He does not tire you with a succession of long ones, nor, unless with a definitely rhetorical intention, does he exasperate you with a long string of short ones.

He has a lively sense of rhythm. His prose has the eighteenth-century tune, like any symphony of Haydn's, though with a truly English accent, and you hear the drums and fifes in it, but an individual note rings through it. It is a virile prose and I can think of no one who wrote with so much force combined with so much elegance. If it seems now a trifle formal, I think that is due to the fact that, like most of the eighteenth-century writers, he used general and abstract terms when we are now more inclined to use special and concrete ones. This gives a greater vividness to modern writing, though at the cost perhaps of concision. It is an amusing exercise to try to translate one of Burke's sentences into such English as the average writer would now write. I have taken one almost at random: 'The tenderest minds, confounded with the dreadful exigence in which morality submits to the suspension of its own rules in favour of its own principles, might turn aside whilst fraud and violence were accomplishing the destruction of a pretended nobility, which disgraced whilst it persecuted, human nature.' It is a fine, rounded period, its meaning is clear and there is not a single word, except perhaps *exigence*, which is not in common use to-day; yet it is one that smacks of its time, no one would express the thought in such a way now, and in passing I may remark that it is a thought which not a few at the present moment may have had. Perhaps a modern writer would put it somewhat as follows: 'There are times when people even of the most sensitive conscience must put the spirit of the law before the letter, and can do no more than stand aside when an effete plutocracy which has disgraced human nature by its persecutions is destroyed, even though by violence and double dealing.' I do not claim that this is good, it is the best I can do after several attempts and I would not deny that it has neither the balance, the nobility nor the compactness of the original.

Burke was an Irishman, and the Irish, as we know, are inclined to verbosity. With them enough is not as good as a feast. They load their table with sumptuous viands, so that sometimes the mere sight surfeits you, and on occasion even, when you come to attack these game pasties, these boars' heads, these lordly peacocks you

discover to your dismay that like the victuals at a banquet in Italian opera they are of *papier mâché*. English is a rich language. Very generally you have a choice between a plain word and a literary one, a concrete and an abstract word ; you can say a thing directly or you can use a periphrase. The greatness, the stateliness of Burke's nature led him to express himself with grandiloquence. His subjects were important and I suppose he would have thought it unbecoming to them and to himself to deliver himself with simplicity. 'It is very well for Burke to express himself in that figurative way,' said Fox. 'It is natural to him ; he talks so to his wife, to his servants, to his children.' It must be admitted that it is sometimes fatiguing. It was not the least of the reasons for his failure in the House of Commons. The greatest speech he ever made there was that on conciliation with the Thirteen States. Lord Morley describes it as 'the wisest in temper, the most closely logical in its reasoning, the amplest in appropriate topics, the most generous and conciliatory in the substance of its appeals.' It drove everybody away.

Dr. Johnson has told us that in his day nobody talked much of style, since everybody wrote pretty well. 'There is an elegance of style universally diffused,' he said. Burke was outstanding. His contemporaries were impressed, as well they might be, by his command of words, his brilliant similes, his hyperboles and fertile imagination, but did not invariably approve. Hazlitt relates a conversation between Fox and Lord Holland on the subject of his style. It appears that this 'Noble Person objected to it as too gaudy and meretricious, and said that it was more profuse of flowers than fruit. On which Mr. Fox observed, that though this was a common objection, it appeared to him altogether an unfounded one ; that on the contrary the flowers often concealed the fruit beneath them ; and the ornaments of style were rather an hindrance than an advantage to the sentiments they were meant to set off. In confirmation of this remark, he offered to take down the book and translate a page anywhere into his own plain, natural style ; and by his doing so, Lord Holland was convinced that he had often missed the thought from having his attention drawn off to the dazzling imagery.' It is instructive to learn that Noble Persons and Eminent Politicians were interested in such questions in those bygone days and with such amiable exercises beguiled their leisure. But of course if his lordship's attention was really drawn off the matter of Burke's discourse by the brilliancy of the

manner, it is a reflection on his style. For the purpose of imagery is not to divert the reader, but to make the meaning clearer to him; the purpose of simile and metaphor is to impress it on his mind and by engaging his fancy make it more acceptable. An illustration is otiose unless it illustrates. Burke had a romantic and a poetic mind such as no other of the eighteenth-century masters of prose possessed, and it is this that gives his prose its variegated colour; but his aim was to convince rather than to please, to overpower rather than to persuade, and by all the resources of his imagination not only to make his point more obvious, but by an appeal to sentiment or passion to compel acquiescence. I don't know when Mr. Fox held his conversation with the Noble Lord, but if the *Reflections on the French Revolution* had then appeared he might well have pointed to it to refute his lordship's contention. For in that work the decoration so interpenetrates the texture of the writing that it becomes part and parcel of the argument. Here imagery, metaphor and simile fulfil their function. The one passage that leaves me doubtful is the most celebrated of all, that in which Burke tells how he saw Marie Antoinette at Versailles; 'and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision.' It is to be found in anthologies, so I will not quote it, but it is somewhat high flown to my taste. But if it is not perfect prose it is magnificent rhetoric; magnificent even when it is slightly absurd: 'I thought ten thousand swords must have leapt from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult'; and the cadence with which the paragraph ends is lovely: 'The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.'

Sir Philip Francis, who was perhaps the author of the *Letters of Junius*, condemned this passage as 'downright foppery' and somewhat surprisingly went on to write: 'Once for all I wish you would let me teach you to write English. To me, who aim to read everything you write, it would be a great comfort, and to you, no sort of disparagement. Why will you not allow yourself to be persuaded that polish is material to preservation?'

As the quotations I have given plainly show Burke made abundant use of metaphor. It is interwoven in the substance of his prose

as the weavers of Lyons thread one colour with another to give a fabric the shimmer of shot silk. Of course like every other writer he uses what Fowler calls the natural metaphor, for common speech is largely composed of them, but he uses freely what Fowler calls the artificial metaphor. It gave concrete substance to his generalisations. He used it to enforce a statement by means of a physical image ; but unlike some modern writers, who will pursue the implications of a metaphor like a spider scurrying along every filament of its web, he took care never to run it to death. Here is a good example of his practice : ' Your constitution, it is true, whilst you were out of possession, suffered waste and dilapidation ; but you possessed in some parts the walls, and, in all, the foundations, of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls ; you might have built on those foundations.'

On the other hand Burke used the simile somewhat sparingly. Modern writers might well follow his example. For of late a dreadful epidemic has broken out. Similes are clustered on the pages of our young authors as thickly as pimples on a young man's face, and they are as unsightly. A simile has use. By reminding you of a familiar thing it enables you to see the subject of the comparison more clearly or by mentioning an unfamiliar one it focuses your attention on it. It is dangerous to use it merely as an ornament ; it is detestable to use it to display your cleverness ; it is preposterous to use it when it neither decorates nor impresses. When Burke used a simile it was generally, as might be expected, with elaboration. Here is the most celebrated one : ' But as to *our* country and *our* race, as long as the well-compacted structure of our church and state, the sanctuary, the holy of holies of that ancient law, defended by reverence, defended by power—a fortress at once and a temple—shall stand inviolate on the brow of the British Sion, as long as the British Monarchy—not more limited than fenced by the orders of the state—shall, like the proud Keep of Windsor, rising in the majesty of proportion, and girt with the double belt of its kindred coeval towers ; as long as this awful structure shall oversee and guard the subjected land, so long the mounds and dykes of the low, fat, Bedford level will have nothing to fear from all the pickaxes of all the levellers of France.'

Few of us writers pay much attention to the paragraph ; we are apt, regardless of the sense, to make a break when we feel the reader deserves the slight rest it gives him. But the extent of a paragraph should be determined not by its length, but by its burden. A

paragraph is a collection of sentences with unity of purpose. It should be concerned with a single topic and contain nothing irrelevant to this. Just as in a 'loose' sentence qualifying statements should not overweight the statement qualified, so in the paragraph statements which are of less import should be subordinate to the statement which is essential. Such are the counsels of perfection given by the grammarian. Burke followed them with considerable fidelity. In his best paragraphs he begins with a statement of his subject in short sentences that arrest attention; goes on with a series of sentences of medium length or with a great, majestic period; the phrases grow ampler and more emphatic till he reaches his climax about the middle of the paragraph, or a little later; then he slows down, the sentences grow shorter, sometimes even abrupt, and he concludes.

I have harped upon the fact that Burke's style owed many of its merits to his practice of speaking in public; to this it owed also such defects as a carping critic might find it. There is more than one passage in the famous speech on the Nabob of Arcot's Debts when he asks a long series of rhetorical questions. It may have been effective in the House of Commons, but on the printed page it is restless and fatiguing. To this may be ascribed his too frequent recourse to the exclamatory sentence. 'Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master.' Something of an old-fashioned air he has by his frequent use of an inverted construction, a mode now seldom met with; he employs it to vary the monotony of the simple order—subject, verb, object—and also to emphasise the significant member of the sentence by placing it first; but such a phrase as 'Personal offence I have given them none' needs the emphasis of the living voice to appear natural. On the other hand it is to his public speaking, I think, that Burke owed his skill in giving to a series of quite short sentences as musical a cadence and as noble a ring as when he set himself to compose an elaborate period with its pompous train of subordinate clauses; and this is shown nowhere to greater advantage than in the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. Here a true instinct made him see that when he was appealing for compassion on account of his age and infirmities and by reminding his readers of the death of his beloved and only son, he must aim at simplicity. The passage is deeply moving:

'The storm has gone over me ; and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honours, I am torn up by the roots, and lie prostrate on the earth. . . . I am alone. I have none to meet my enemies in the gate. Indeed, my lord, I greatly deceive myself, if in this hard season I would give a peck of refuse wheat for all that is called fame and honour in the world. This is the appetite but of a few. It is a luxury, it is a privilege, it is an indulgence for those who are at their ease. But we are all of us made to shun disgrace, as we are made to shrink from pain, and poverty, and disease. It is an instinct ; and under the direction of reason, instinct is always in the right. I live in an inverted order. They who ought to have succeeded me have gone before me. They who have should have been to me as posterity are in the place of ancestors. I owe to the dearest relation (which ever must subsist in memory) that act of piety, which he would have performed to me ; I owe it to him to show that he was not descended, as the Duke of Bedford would have it, from an unworthy parent.'

Here the best words are indeed put in the best places. This piece owes little to picturesque imagery, nothing to romantic metaphor, and proves with what justification Hazlitt described him as, with the exception of Jeremy Taylor, the most poetical of prose-writers. I hope it will not be considered a literary conceit (a trifling, tedious business) when I suggest that in the tender melody of these cadences, in this exquisite choice of simple words, there is a foretaste of Wordsworth at his admirable best. If these pages should persuade anyone to see for himself how great a writer Burke was I cannot do better than ask him to read this *Letter to a Noble Lord*. It is the finest piece of invective in the English language and so short that it can be read in an hour. It offers in its brief compass a survey of all Burke's dazzling gifts, his formal as well as his conversational style, his gift for epigram and for irony, his wisdom, his sense, his pathos, his indignation and his nobility.

Umaru

BY JOYCE CARY

IT had been raining for two days, the drizzling mountain rain of the Cameroons. The detachment, on special duty behind the German lines, was under strict orders not to be noticed. That was its duty as well as its only security. Fires could not be lit except in brightest day. No tents were carried. But the subaltern in charge, young Corner, had brought a tent-fly with him ; an old fly looted from some German camp. Camouflage had not yet reached these remote parts, except in practice, but this big oblong of canvas, once green, had withered to shades of dun and olive which matched perfectly the sparse northern bush.

At sundown the drizzle became only more varied in texture. The wind was rising and the sky, till that moment one weeping bank of water-grey mist, so low that at a little distance it could be seen tangled in the thorns, began to break into enormous clouds, or not yet clouds, shapeless drifts. Corner looking at his men, huddled in their cloaks while they ate their cold porridge, and feeling the rain trickle down his own back, thought that no creature in the world could be more miserable than a wet soldier. He called the old Sergeant. 'We'll sleep under the fly, Sergeant. There's room for all of us with our feet in the middle.'

Sergeant Umaru, thirty-year veteran, called often Father Umaru by the men, heard with customary wooden disdain ; and answered only with a sketchy war-salute. But the men were shy. When the party went to bed, in a well-drained sandy hollow among low scrub, Corner and the Sergeant found themselves alone at one edge, while the men's heads, pretty close together, stuck out on the other three sides.

The arrangement, no doubt, would have looked comic to an observer in a balloon ; it would have seemed like a vast family bed with one white and nineteen black faces sticking out all round a large patchwork quilt. But it did not strike the family as comic. The clouds, as they were lifted higher on the strong wind and rolled into thicker lumps, let fall a much thicker rain, in splashes

as if from buckets carelessly tipped about. The family was glad of its cover.

The men murmured together in their high voices, very like sleepy children. Corner, with his head on a rolled macintosh, tried to sleep, but he kept on being waked by some bit of talk in a familiar voice, as a man, even asleep, catches anything said by one of his own household. A certain Salé, a thin gangling lad with a balky eye, remarked that for his part he'd rather be a horseboy. And Corner's ear noted, That was meant for me. So Salé has ambitions—he wants to be in the horse-lines, and I thought he was hostile. That eye probably meant only that he was wondering how to make an approach. A moment later he was brought awake again by the deeper voice of one Adamu, a tall and powerful river pagan, renowned for his savage temper, who was talking about his village. 'A good place—good land—plenty of water. You never saw such onions. And the fish—*aiee*! Women too. Now up here women are no good. The north is bad for women. In the sun they burn up and go hard. You want to come down our way for women. But it's what they always say. Women and fish, if good you would wish, seek where shady groves by rivers flourish. Yes, a moist folk.' All this in a soft chant like a man repeating someone else's poem. 'Yes, a good land in all ways—we have a lovely place—*aiee*!'

'A rotten place, I know it well.' This was from a little bandy-hill pagan, called officially Moma Gombe, and unofficially Shoot-Monkey. 'Now Kano—that is the place—a real city.'

'No, it isn't very good, perhaps,' Adamu agreed unexpectedly in the same dreamy voice. 'Yes, it has its faults—too many floods—too far from the big markets—'

One of the others suddenly uttered a loud yawn and exclaimed, 'Ow, my bottom,' and the young Corporal at the top left-hand corner reproved him, 'Shut up, you'll wake Three-Eyes.'

Three-Eyes was Corner, who was therefore obliged to lie still and try to sleep. In a few minutes he was actually going to sleep, but at the last moment of half-consciousness, just as he was congratulating himself, I really am nearly asleep, he came so instantly and feverishly awake that it was hopeless even to think of sleeping. His legs ached, every nerve twitched, lights jumped in front of his shut eyes, and all the cells in his brain seemed to be darting about and banging together like bubbles in soda water.

The men were already asleep. There were snores and grunts. One of them muttered a few words, 'but it's so high—I don't—'

Corner gave it up ; he could no longer stand the commotion inside. The rain had stopped some time before, abruptly, after five minutes quick fire ; he turned on his back and opened his eyes, to be startled by a commotion overhead even more wild and much more grand. There were now at least three levels of cloud all moving in different directions. The old round clouds, now once more joined in masses, but masses of enormous size and sharp outline, moved slowly with a vast piled dignity almost due east ; a second layer, much lower, was made up of fantastic torn shapes, swimming fast like the debris of a flood. One saw something like a drowned bullock, swollen and limp, with twisted body and its legs pointing opposite ways, and a haycock just breaking up into wafts of straw. Or it was more like the ruins of some immense jig-saw map—Germany, France, Italy, England, Scotland, with their jagged coastlines and frontiers, caught up in some furious gale of time, and being stretched, squeezed, joined and divided in the process ; not by sudden jerks, but by a smooth continuous deformation, which was much more expressive of the powers at work.

And below all, moving faster still, as fast as a horse could gallop, and in a third direction, white fragments, wisps trailing their filmy skirts not much higher than the trees, seemed like ghosts of clouds, lost benighted creatures rushing through the dark transparent space below the tumult in the desperate anxious hurry of all lost creatures trying to find out where they are, and what they are, and where they ought to be.

A sudden movement beside him made Corner turn his head. Old Umaru, also on his back, with open eyes, had just scratched the calf of one leg with the toe-nails of the other. Corner spoke without meditation. It was as if the vivacity of his nerves was glad to find tongue. 'How would you like to be back in Bauchi, Sargy, in a nice warm house ?'

Umaru said in his driest tone, 'I don't live in Bauchi.'

'Then why are you called Umaru Bauchi ?'

'That's just a Company name.'

'Where do you come from then ?'

'Nowhere. I don't belong anywhere.'

'But where were you born ?'

'On war.' He used the word used by the old Emirs to mean an army in being, on the move. 'I go where the Company goes,' and he added severely, as if instructing a small boy, 'that's the best way.'

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'But the Company has a home, it was stationed at Bauchi. That's where it has its wives and its friends.'

'Friends. I don't have friends. Friends are no good.'

Corner was now quite content to lie awake and to enjoy the sky and the talk. He was extremely awake, but the commotion inside had suddenly vanished, as if drawn out of him by that of the sky, that was, the lower sky. For in the upper layer, that region of cold majestic forms, the moon, which had for a long time, itself out of sight, been throwing a brilliant greenish light on the precipices of the top clouds, as on a range of Himalayas, was now very slowly projecting one edge of itself into a small triangle of blue already so full of white glitter that it was scarcely blue at all.

Suddenly in a different tone, abrupt and reluctant, but undoubtedly curious, such as Corner had never before heard from the old man, he asked, 'In your country, Caftin, among the water, do you keep friends?'

'Of course, plenty.'

The Sergeant pondered. At last he exclaimed, 'Plenty. I have friends too—like that.' His tone abolished this promiscuous relation as something casual and frivolous. But his voice ended on a high note; it seemed that he was about to make further confidences. The young man waited with an expectation which seemed to have occupied all the place of those restless cells, a feeling not only of curiosity but discovery. He had taken the Sergeant for a good stolid Hausa, a sundried old soldier without an idea beyond his trade, and now it seemed that he had reflections of his own. He had always liked Umaru for his honesty and his courage, but now he felt, especially at the point where his elbow touched the old man's back, a warmth of sympathy.

The moon, but half disclosed, was cut off as by a shutter. A vast black cloud below, a ragged tormented thing shaped like Greece, but with an immensely stretched out isthmus at Corinth, had come rushing across the middle darkness. It was hustled by in a few minutes, but as its distorted Peloponnese was dragged away by the neck, a volley of big rain, cold heavy drops, widely spaced, came smacking down as out of clear space. They made a quite surprisingly loud report on the hollow canvas and stung the face. But the young man did not pull in his head. He was still pre-occupied with Umaru's last remark.

'But Umaru, it isn't good for a man to be lonely.'

'Yes, it is, very good.' This was with great conviction. Umaru was lying rigid with his little grey beard aimed truculently at the moon, now once more in sight, and with her full face. She had proceeded at least another half-inch upon her way during that interruption. 'Very, very good. That's the way to live—like a Haji.' A Haji is a pilgrim.

'Ah then, God is your friend.'

'No—no, no—no,' with all the explosive violence of the Hausa negative. 'God is——' He paused, trying to find an adequate word. Then he said in a mild tone, 'He is our great One.'

'Yes, that's true.' The young man certainly felt the greatness at that moment, but not with any reverence, only elation. Simply because he began to admire the scene as beauty, it seemed to him more extraordinary. He said to Umaru, carrying on the conversation, 'It's a grand night now—look at those clouds.'

'A bad night,' Umaru said. 'Very bad. More storms coming. A bad, bad night. God help us.'

'But good to look at.'

'To look at.' Umaru said this with wondering contempt. Again there was a long silence. Then suddenly he muttered in a grumbling tone, 'Time for sleep—God bless you with it.'

'And you, Father.'

'And health.'

'And much health.'

'God prolong us,' in a growl. He turned on his side. But the young man lay on his back for another hour, and still at the place where his elbow touched Umaru's back he was aware of a certain activity of feeling at work as if by itself; an affectionate concern which did not stop. At least, it was still there when he noticed it some time later. It was laughing, too, by itself, but not at Umaru. It was quite independent, a serene enjoyment.

Temples in Sicily

BY PETER QUENNEL

ROUND a bend of the broad dusty road that winds down from the hill city of Agrigento towards its ruined temples, a mule was shying and rearing, terrified by the racket of an ascending motor-bus. At its head was a boy of seven or eight ; the mule's plunges had wrenched his arm—it was a strong and youngish animal—and swinging the slack of the halter-rope he began to lash it frantically. It balked, stubborn and stiff-legged, then broke into a trot and tried to drag him downhill. Dangling furiously from the halter, he forced it to a walking pace. Again it refused to budge, again it attempted to bolt ; while the boy cursing it in a shrill voice, hoarse with fear and anger, frightened himself but above all enraged by the rebellious conduct of this sweating, trembling and side-swerving piece of unwieldy animal mechanism, aimed savage kicks at its legs and presently, as high as his foot could reach, at the barrel-shaped ribs and belly. Should a traveller interfere ? With verbal remonstrances in bad Italian to a boy who spoke Sicilian dialect ? By a display of superior strength and skill, which would probably have ended in humiliating failure ? By a gift of money which would have caused him to be regarded as mad, or as the prospective purchaser of a mule which he would have been obliged to turn loose or consign to a similar existence with another peasant family ? So, self-reproachful and undecided, he left them at the bend of the road—an emblematic group representing Fear and Cruelty, demons that, however deliberately we reject their influence, however plausibly we may trace them back to their ultimate social origin, still arouse a disturbing, not unresponsive, vibration somewhere in the human consciousness. We are seldom as far from them as we hope and pretend ; and, confronted with the spectacle of violence and terror, we feel that we are entering the presence of an older range of deities, whose effect on our imaginations, sufficiently familiar in childhood, has never quite been shaken off.

In every religious system of the ancient world, the dark gods occupied a considerable niche ; and, whereas classicists of the nine-

teenth century showed us Olympus as a kind of heavenly Parthenon, white, gleaming, immaculate, peopled by a divine race of human appearance but more than human comeliness, modern scholars have exploded that view of the Olympian hierarchy, pointing to numerous relics of gloomier cults and ages—venerated lumps of wood and stone, primitive sanguinary gods and their animal-headed consorts. Religions and civilisations differ in the extent to which the divinities of the spiritual underworld—or, as a contemporary psychologist might prefer to say, of the unexplored subconscious—are recognised or disregarded. No one, for instance, who has entered Peking's Lama Temple, where the atmosphere of terror and mystery is heightened by the solemn minotaur-bellowing of twelve-foot brazen horns, or has climbed to the gaudy pavilion perched upon a wooded hillock from which a many-headed, many-armed monster glares down across the Forbidden City, will have forgotten how completely the Tantric or Thibetan rite, the debased off-shoot of the Buddhist faith that found official favour with the latest Chinese Emperors, overlaid and obliterated its earliest, gentler aspects. In place of a philosophic nihilism, we encounter the wildest forms of unabashed diabolism. The radiant yet pensive saints of classical Chinese art, their eyelids weighted with infinite compassion, resignation in each fluid line of their supple folded bodies, have been ousted by rank behind rank of raging northern Devils, who suck blood from half an inverted skull, flourish an immense battery of threatening, clawing pseudopods, and even in the ecstasy of love, when a female demon, her tongue extruded, rushes to impale herself on her grimacing counterpart, remain as mindlessly inimical to humanity as the Pacific typhoon or the Himalayan snow-storm. Here is, if not the ultimate degradation, at least a grotesque distortion, of the religious impulse, man's final act of surrender before the demons that surround him. Some cults—indeed the majority—have had both a dark and a light side; but there have also been phases of civilisation from which, though rarely for very long, the dark divinities have been thrust out. The ancient dragon has been cast into the pit, the mouth of Hades walled over.

Temporarily in the *douceur de vivre* it has proved possible to forget the fears and pains of living; and such a moment would appear to have been enjoyed by the prosperous citizens of Akragas, the city which in Roman times was known as Agrigentum, which the Italians called Girgenti and which, during Mussolini's rule, they re-named Agrigento. Of Syracuse Cicero wrote that so sober were

its inhabitants, so practical and hard-working, that they bore little resemblance to other Greeks, whose effeminate and volatile temperament disconcerted and disgusted stolid Roman business men. While Syracuse was the home of skill and knowledge, a background for the speculations of Plato and the discoveries of Archimedes, Akragas was the city of pleasure, peopled by men and women less concerned with the arduous search for first causes than with gliding smoothly and pleasantly across the surface of existence, admiring the exquisite bloom a well-tended surface offers. Sensible hedonists, reasonable voluptuaries, like Homer's Phaeacians they were neither athletes nor adventurers but, as Alkinous suavely explained to his guest when he described his happy subjects, 'ever delighted in feasts and dances and music, in frequent changes of clothing and hot baths and love and sleep.' They were proud, too, of the city they owned, the long line of temples looking out over the African Sea, the splendour of their private dwellings, even the beauty of their funerary monuments, some (writes Diodorus Siculus) 'adorned with the charging horses of the heroes they interred, others with those little birds that the children, both girls and boys, fed and bred up in their parents' houses.' To provide fish at public banquets, they had constructed a huge stew-pond just beyond the city walls, haunted by swans and many-coloured water-fowl; and, as for the personal state they kept, 'their nice and delicate way of living (till it came to their very children) . . . was to that degree, that they wore garments of cloth of gold, and had their water-pots, and boxes of ointment, of gold and silver.' Their hospitality was renowned, perhaps a trifle ostentatious; and Polyclitus the historian, according to Diodorus, speaks of having inspected a celebrated wine-cellar, 'in which were contained three hundred great vessels, cut out of one and the same rock, each of which received an hundred hogsheads,' and 'a cistern of pure white tempered mortar, containing a thousand hogsheads, out of which the liquor ran into the vessels.'

With nearly a quarter of a million inhabitants, of whom only one in ten, however, was a fully enfranchised citizen, Akragas was designated by Pindar 'the loveliest city of mortals,' the 'eye of Sicily,' 'the sacred settlement beside the river,' a 'lofty city lavish above all in gifts to the gods.' More sharply Plato, that inveterate foe to easy satisfaction, observed that the men of Akragas built as if they had no thought of death, and dined as if the hour of the dinner-party was expected to be their last one. Possibly they were

right to do so ; for these opulent and pleasure-living burgesses who had ' grown very rich by their trading with the Libyans ' and sold produce of their olive-yards in Carthaginian markets, as inescapably as modern Europeans lived beneath a constant shadow. Since the beginning of the fifth century, Carthaginian armies had been encamped on the Sicilian coast-line, spear-head of the warrior-trader race which, except for a few noble coins, evidently designed by captive Greek artificers, has left behind no art, no literature, nothing visible, palpable, audible to redeem and recommend it. Carthage is a gap in history ; and out of the void reverberate the names of its generals, sonorous and metallic—Hannibal, Hamilcar, Hasdrubal, soldiers of a commercial empire, cruel and efficient barbarians perpetually at war with beauty, peace and happiness. Often defeated, they often returned ; and in the Year 406 B.C. Himilco and Hannibal, son of Gisco, planned to capture Akragas. The citizens, though they had little real appetite for conflict, managed to put up a brave face. They made preparations to resist a blockade, engaged a mercenary Spartan general and appealed for assistance to their Syracuse allies. The barbarians landed, and they consented to man the walls ; but the habits of freedom and independence were difficult to throw off ; and ' at the very height of the siege . . . a decree was made, that none of them that were upon guard in the night should have above a bed, a tent, a woollen mantle, and two pillows. . . . This seemed a hard law,' a grievous ' disturbance to their ease and repose,' by which we may judge (Diodorus remarks) ' how soft and luxurious they were in all other things.' Nevertheless they might have prevailed, had their allies not abandoned them ; and it was only when food ran short that the Akragantines—characteristically, no doubt—decided they must leave their city. Some committed suicide rather than lose their possessions—those in whom the love of life had become completely identified with the protective material envelope they had built around their inner selves ; but an immense disorganised convoy took the road for the friendly city of Gela, ' so that all the ways and country towards Gela swarmed with a promiscuous multitude of women and children ; amongst whom were young ladies, who though they had now changed their former soft and delicate way of living, into the fatigues and sorrows of tedious journeys, yet being quickened and stirred up by fear, bore all difficulties with eminent patience.' Looking back to the city they adored, they may some of them have caught sight of a tremendous conflagration, illuminating the row of temples built

upon its seaward edge. A certain Gellias, 'eminent above the rest of his countrymen in the greatness of his wealth, and integrity of his conversation,' had sought refuge in the temple of Athene, hoping that the Carthaginians might respect the shrines of the gods. Disappointed, he set fire to the building and perished in the destruction of its vast accumulated treasure.

A cautionary tale for the epicurean ; but the deliberate cultivation of the *douceur de vivre* has other disadvantages. Since contentment is probably an unnatural condition, epicureans are apt to develop a curious strain of pettiness : the works they produce have none of the grandeur sometimes achieved by more passionate and more deeply troubled artists. Thus it is the placing of Akragas' ruined temples, high on a long ridge between the sea-shore and the modern town, rather than the architecture of the temples themselves, that gives them their distinction. The Temple of Concord, for example, labelled by guide books 'one of the best preserved ancient temples in existence,' reminded me of Byron's remark when, accompanied by a Cambridge friend, he first set eyes upon the Parthenon and observed with a provocative sneer that he found it 'very like the Mansion House.' For the Temple of Concord is unmistakably a tidy civic edifice, neat and compact and harmoniously regular. But the glittering white marble-hard stucco with which the temples were sheathed has little by little flaked off, exposing the warm surface of the yellow porous limestone ; and from the shrine of Hera at the end of the ridge the sacred rock falls gradually away towards the gigantic remains of the Temple of Olympian Zeus in an intricate, endlessly delightful pattern of yellow, green and silver drab—the silver of olives, the dark green of orange groves and the lighter, livelier green of peach trees, broken by the tawny colour of standing columns and rock and tumbled masonry, among fountains of vaporous fruit blossom that last into the late spring.

The Greeks chose the sites of their cities and sanctuaries not merely for practical but also for religious—or, which perhaps comes almost to the same thing, for psychological and æsthetic—reasons. The temples of Akragas, Selinus and Segesta are not only boldly and beautifully placed, but they occupy situations in which the whole mood of the landscape—difficult to describe but, when it is unfriendly, impossible to escape from—seems especially harmonious. A friend subject to recurrent attacks of gloom once declared that he could cover the entire map of Europe pointing out the 'cafard-

centres. Santorin, I remember, was a particularly dangerous island ; but there were other plague spots in which all the nervous apprehensions and grim recollections of the human race appeared to have been concentrated. Similarly, there are corners of the earth where the human burden loses its weight, the body fits the spirit as a glove the hand inside it, where every movement and nearly every word promises, momentarily at least, to acquire the same coherence. I had felt calm and secure among the ruins of Agrigento, seated on the steps of Hera's temple, picking and trying to draw some of the wild flowers in the grass around—tall, angular, spiky asphodel, bright yellow snapdragon, minute cardinal-red sweet peas—and, two days later, the same sensation returned at Selinus or Selinunte, a wide table-land broken off above the sea in an abrupt and rocky cliff-edge. The sea itself here is peculiarly well-mannered, neither listless as in some parts of the Mediterranean which have barely determination to push ashore their own refuse but keep apathetically turning and mumbling a fringe of ancient sea rubbish, nor truculent and boisterous like Atlantic breakers. Curling waves pawed at the dark volcanic sand masterfully yet cheerfully ; the beach was spacious and clean, hard enough underfoot to make for pleasant walking. Inland, behind and around the temples, stretched during the spring months acres of green wheat and deliciously scented flowering beans ; and distant farm houses stood out in light-toned cubes of masonry, giving just that reminder of human existence which, as Poussin and Claude discovered, the perfect classical landscape needs. For a time we were quite alone ; but a young goat-herd presently emerged from among the mountainous ruins, driving his flock towards the edge of the cliff, through labyrinths of stone and in and out of the bushes of spurge and wild rosemary. To watch goats feeding is usually enjoyable ; for they have none of the mechanical assiduity of browsing sheep or oxen, but trickle and spill in a river of animation across the ground they pasture on, hooves clicking and scrabbling against stones and potters, mounting a huge block in a single sudden leap, with a dip of the horns and a shake of the beard as lightly leaping out of view, every goat pursuing a separate course, drifting, side-stepping and prancing apart, yet, while bells tinkle and the goat-herd whistles and shouts, always slowly reassembling. Moreover, the goat is one of the very few animals that give the impression they see human beings clearly. Now and then it will pause in its meal, a tuft of green-stuff in the corner of its mouth, and turn on the

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stranger a look, not of fear or respect, but of cold and glassy interest—a devilish glance with its twisted horns, its long narrow priapic face and the beard which is formidable but somehow never venerable.

Besides the goat-herd and the custodian of the ruins, a small, friendly, inconspicuous man who bore the splendid name of Barbarossa, we met, strolling through the fields, the local *carabiniere*, with a round youthful face beneath his patent-leather hat, who told us he came from the mainland, since to put a Sicilian policeman among Sicilians was always inadvisable, and talked at length about Giuliano, the celebrated bandit chief of Monte Lepre. Rather surprisingly for a representative of the law, he admitted that he was on Giuliano's side; the bandit, he said, was a *buono ragazzo*; and almost every crime committed within a hundred miles of his native mountain was written off, in nine instances out of ten altogether unjustifiably, as Giuliano's doing. Later we were overtaken on the shore by a crafty dark-browed peasant. Cautiously in the hollow of his hand he showed us some fragments of bronze that he professed to have dug up—a delicate ancient fish-hook and a few battered coins, displaying on one side the head of a tutelary nymph, on the other a long-legged horse accompanied by a palm-tree. He drove a hard bargain, to which I presently agreed—not, however, because I much admired the coins but because I wished to carry off some solid memorial of Selinunte, of its rippling verdant landscape and the strong scent of the flowering beans, the bloom of light that lay upon fields and waves, and the mysterious impression of calm and well-being that seemed to descend from the air or rise from the earth like dew, but was destined gradually to disappear once we had taken the road again. . . .

A second glance at the coins I had bought assured me they were valueless. Moreover, they were probably late. For weren't the horse and the palm-tree Carthaginian emblems, and didn't this mean that they belonged to a period after the Carthaginian conquest? Selinus, too, collapsed in the wave of aggression which, at the end of the fifth and the beginning of the fourth centuries, overwhelmed Akragas, Gela, Himera, Kamarina and gravely threatened Syracuse. As the westernmost of Grecian cities, Selinus had pursued a pacific policy towards its barbarian neighbours: the Selinuntines had even sided with the Carthaginians against Akragas and Syracuse: but their collaboration was of no help to them in

409 B.C., when Hannibal invested the city, breached the walls after a fiercely contested siege and, step by step, fought his way into the central market-place. There followed a particularly hideous sack, with universal rape and slaughter, the barbarians raging through the streets carrying bandoliers of severed hands or 'the heads of the slain upon the points of their swords and spears.' Yet, although the Carthaginians exceeded 'all other men in impiety,' they would not, or could not, destroy the Selinuntine sacred edifices, which continued to stand until, some time during the Dark Ages, they were demolished by an earthquake. This prodigious catastrophe, which almost completely overthrew seven unusually large and massively constructed temples, occurred during a period when history was no longer written, or when, by men capable of writing, the western end of Sicily was very rarely visited. But a number of admirable metopes—the square panels of bas-relief placed at intervals beneath the frieze of every Doric building—have been removed to the protection of the museum at Palermo. They range from *Europa on the Bull* and *Perseus beheading the Gorgon*, carved at the beginning of the sixth century, to the splendid *Herakles subduing an Amazon* and *Zeus welcoming Hera*, created in the early fifth. Only a hundred years divide them—but what a gulf of feeling! Perseus still lives in the archaic world of fairy-tales. His divine protectress smiling behind him, smiling himself broadly and self-confidently, he seizes the Gorgonian top-knot while he slips the blade of his sword underneath the monster's chin. But Herakles and Zeus have entered the world of adult emotion and adult understanding. The irresistible strength of the hero is in poignant and dramatic contrast to the comparative weakness of the Amazon who, her foot pinned below his, reels away from the final blow he is just about to deal her; and Zeus and Hera—an extraordinarily ingenious piece of formal composition, beautifully designed to fill up the space dictated by the architect—produce an impression of emotional, even erotic, intensity seldom met in Greek sculpture, as the god, who is half reclining, his hand grasping her upraised wrist, draws towards his embrace the reluctant virginal goddess. The backgrounds of such reliefs, probably the figures too, were always brightly coloured. So were the triglyphs—the geometrical plaques arranged between the metopes—parts of the glistening white columns, the cornices and pediments. The effect of a Hellenic temple, surrounded by a grove of tripods, altars, votive-statues, must have been as exuberantly polychromatic as that of any thirteenth-century Gothic church.

Taking the southward road from Syracuse, and after the incomparable city of Noto turning west and north-west, the clock-wise perambulator of Sicily presently arrives at its extreme western angle, at Marsala, a pleasant but prosy town, dedicated to the wine-trade, and Trapani, the ancient Drepana, a noisy modern seaport beneath the rampart of Mount Eryx. Here and at Marsala, which the Romans knew as Lilybaeum, were Carthaginian strong-points; and on the summit of Mount Eryx, alongside a temple to the Carthaginian god Melkarth, was a famous shrine of Aphrodite, identified with Astarte or Ashtaroth, the Phœnician moon-goddess, served by 'women sacred to the goddess'—in other words, by temple prostitutes—whom 'the inhabitants of Sicily' and of neighbouring regions had 'offered in accomplishment of their vows.' A legend of pleasure still clings to this forbidding mountain-mass; and even today the women of Eryx, renamed Monte San Giuliano, are celebrated, if not for their facility, at least for their unusual beauty. Trapani, nevertheless, is not a place to pause in; despite the existence of one or two exceedingly sumptuous Baroque churches, their altars and side-chapels magnificently inlaid with many coloured marbles, the impression it makes on a traveller is neither cheerful nor hospitable. Such is the effect in far-western Sicily of the Carthaginian heritage; the human type is darker and surlier; the personality of towns and villages seems to have undergone a subtle alteration. One is conscious of the shadow of Africa, like the evening shadow of some oppressive land-mark flung across a sun-lit prospect.

Moving towards Segesta we came in sight of Europe again. There, seen through a nick in the skyline, was the Temple of Demeter, small and far-off but beautifully distinct against a neighbouring mountain-side. At a closer view, one notes that its columns are completely spherical, built of circular drums unbroken by the customary Doric grooves. For the huge building remained unfinished; its pillars were to have been ornamented after they had been set up; but, owing to poverty or the constant vicissitudes of Sicilian affairs, the work was never undertaken. The ancient city, which climbed the opposite slope, has disappeared, leaving behind it only a thick scattering of broken tiles and potsherds. The shrine of Demeter stands entirely alone, wrapped in such an atmosphere of romantic solitude as I have encountered nowhere else. If Selinunte is the most poetic of Sicilian temple sites and Agrigento the most urbane, Segesta is the loneliest. Not that it is difficult to

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reach or far from a highway ; yet even the conscientious efforts of Mussolini's government, who since my last visit had driven a motor road to the foot of the hill, provided a wooden hut for the convenience of tourists and begun to construct a kind of municipal rockery with cactus-spikes and hardy shrubs, have scarcely spoiled its isolation—the air of loneliness that weighs on the temple itself, an immense quadrangle of grey columns about the grassy unpaved sanctuary floor, or the penetrating emptiness and remoteness of the vast surrounding landscape.

Above and beyond the ruins, dominating but not dwarfing them, tower the limestone precipices of the range called Monte Barbaro. But there is a deep gorge between the temple and the mountain ; and from its edge one looks down on to a looped and tangled river, with clear pools lodged like fragments of green glass among the rocks and pebble banks. Somewhere a distant cascade kept up continuous water-music ; and now and then out of the walls of the ravine, blue rock doves would flash into the air and whirl off down the gulf below, their flight an explosion of sound and colour—very different from the flight of the jackdaws which wheeled and drifted round the temple-eaves, dusky and silent-winged but incessantly talkative, with metallic voices sadder and keener of those of any rookery. Green lizards basked on the steps and flickered away to the crevices of the porous limestone columns. Otherwise Segesta was lifeless ; and when, at the bottom of the hill, a man in a peaked cap appeared and stood leaning on his bicycle, he seemed an emanation of the landscape he sprang from, barely capable of answering the simplest questions that we asked him. The theatre, he indicated, was somewhere above us, pointing vaguely to the opposite hillside and to a rough trace which climbed and vanished across a rocky shoulder. We had a sultry and exhausting walk. Ancient Segesta must have been a hill-city, with streets as precipitous and twisted as those of Ragusa or Agrigento. Only broken pottery and tiles remain : shards of earthenware have a permanence denied to solid masonry. Then, just over the brow of the slope, we came on the grey wall buttressing the theatre circle ; for, whereas most Greek theatres are hollowed from the native rock, this theatre has been artificially raised, to command the tremendous sweep of the valley that drops away in front of it, mile after cloud-fretted mile, rising at last to steep cultivated uplands and further ragged mountain ridges.

Here the wind blew through spurge and asphodel ; and the air

of loneliness that envelopes Segesta assumed a different quality. It was coloured by a sense of exaltation—the exaltation that comes of space and height, a mood to which both Greek and English romantic poets have proved particularly sensitive. One thinks of Prometheus, pinned to a Caucasian rock, surveying the ‘unnumbered laughter’ of ocean far beneath him, and of Ion, in the temple courtyard, apostrophising ‘sun and light of day and the heavenly ripples of a flying cloud.’ Segesta, like every Greek theatre, arouses the poetic dramatist who may lie buried and forgotten somewhere even in the literary journalist. The spirit of the place urges creative expression. Some terrible figure should tread that stage : lines of memorable choric beauty should be chanted from the dancing floor. Evidently the actors must be larger than life ; for realism would dwindle into insignificance against this prodigious prospect of sky and valley and mountain-slope ; and, indeed, the Greek drama, so far as it has been preserved and we can profess to understand it, is probably closer to the dramas of the East—for instance, to the Japanese *No* play—than to the type of drama accepted in England since the Restoration. The *No* actor does not walk : he glides across the stage with phantom stealth and smoothness. From his mask comes not the magnified and exaggerated voice of an ordinary human being, but a sound as impressively remote from life as the sighing of wind through trees, the groaning of a storm-vexed branch or the crepitation of a distant avalanche. Sites chosen for Greek theatres—in Taormina looking along an incomparably beautiful coastline : in Syracuse commanding a nobly spacious sea-inlet—require just that suggestion of extra-human majesty which was emphasised by the actor’s mask, by his thick-soled buskins and, no doubt, by the stylised gait and gestures with which he made his entrance. Could such a drama be ever revived—a drama including both the light and dark, Baudelaire’s horror of existence and his ‘ecstasy of living’ ? Upon the empty stage, beneath the noble curve of the shallow empty stone seats, imagination begins to sketch in scenes, evoking a portentous personage, almost supplying the sonorous lines he utters. *Almost*—for between the verses one has nearly written, images that perpetually hover a fraction out of arm’s length, and the verses captured and finally written down, stretches a gulf wide and deep as one of the Syracusan quarries. Only genius could bridge the chasm ; and there was no genius to bring back to Segesta the figures that should people it. So the appropriate drama remains unwritten—another volume in

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that ghostly shelf where an author preserves the masterpieces he has planned and knows that he cannot hope to achieve, works more simple yet more profound, more straightforward yet more allusive, more poetic yet more firmly based upon direct experience, than any book of his writing that will ever reach the publisher's hands.

A New Egyptology?

BY WALTER SMART

FROM the age of Classical Greece, Ancient Egypt has been a subject of such passionate interest to all the civilised world that in England today we cannot fail to be interested by recent developments which have been agitating Cairo and Paris—‘the cold war,’ as M. André Rousseaux, the French writer and literary critic of *Le Figaro*, has termed it, between orthodox Egyptology and the new symbolist school, centred in the family of the Baron de Lubicz, resident and researcher in Luxor for the last decade, and in several younger Egyptologists. Egyptology was born and developed during an age of extreme rationalism. Champollion, the great discoverer, at one moment had a suspicion that in the hieroglyphs there might be something symbolical but his short life hardly allowed him the time to do more than expose his momentous discoveries of the script. Had he not died so young, his genius might perhaps have led us deeper into a knowledge of Ancient Egypt. During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth a series of eminent Egyptologists carried on the work which Champollion had begun. Excavation increased the material available for study, though unscientific methods of excavation probably obliterated many invaluable records.

It was perhaps to the ultimate advantage of Egyptology that extreme rationalism, which tended to foster a scrupulous exactness in the accumulation of material information and to preserve us from the fantasies of mystery-mongers, should have been the guiding element in its early development; and we owe a great debt to the pioneers who devoted their lives to opening up for us vistas of a remote past, full of significance in the series of civilisations. But orthodox Egyptology has been inclined to consider that Ancient Egypt has little to offer us in the way of philosophical speculation, that it was chiefly remarkable for excellent artisanship, for some astronomical and mathematical eminence, for extraordinary architectural ingenuity, for great qualities of concrete

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observation, especially of nature. Its religion has generally been consigned to the realm of superstitions, from which emerge at times the higher conceptions of monotheism. The Ancient Egyptians have been regarded as a materialist people, so much pre-occupied with material blessings that they wished to carry them along into the world after death.

Reactions against these views have generally been ridiculous. From the 'pyramidologists' to the ingenious Abbé Moreux, the most fantastic 'esoteric' theories have been woven round incomprehensible texts and monuments providing little justification for such fantasies. Yet there persisted a feeling, even among unsentimental scholars, that the whole story had not been told. The fact remained that a civilisation had been stabilised during four millennia, through periodic interruptions of temporal overturn and re-establishment, with the same gods, the same traditions, the same norms of art and conduct, the same social coherence. Its accomplishments in architecture, in monumental miracles, in sculpture and painting, in the applied arts, had been subjects of admiration and astonishment in all the lands of the Greco-Roman world, and farther east. Its armies had reached the Taurus and Euphrates. Its prestige had been immense. The Greeks had attributed their science and their philosophy to Ancient Egypt. Was it conceivable that the thought of Egyptian civilisation was adequately represented by the puerilities which were practically all that literal interpretation could extract from its records? Was it possible that so great a people could have been so dully materialist, so devoid of philosophy, of speculation? Was it probable even that perfect-artisanship could have been evolved against the background of intellectual nullity? Could these enigmatic figures be devoid of all but the most superficial meanings?

The twentieth century has seen a weakening of the rather naïve rationalism of the nineteenth. The limitations of cerebrality are admitted, the possibility of extra-rational comprehensions is no longer dismissed as absurd. Ethnological researches like those of Marcel Griaule, now a Professor at the Sorbonne, have revealed traces of ancient cosmologies and metaphysics, reflected in the civilisations of the Mediterranean peoples, still existent among black races whom we regard as primitive. The theory that real civilisation began in Hellas, except by incorrigible sentimentalists, is no longer taken seriously. Evans' discoveries alone revealed preliminaries in Crete, and Crete leads back to Egypt. The intel-

lectual atmosphere has become favourable for a re-examination of the problem of Ancient Egypt.

M. de Lubicz, with Madame de Lubicz and her daughter Mlle. Lucie Lamy, established themselves in Luxor nearly ten years ago, and have been working steadily ever since, even through the torrid summers of Upper Egypt. M. de Lubicz has the habit of working during the night and sleeping during the day. He is not the first person who has found that the stillness of the night is conducive to sustained brain work. But this nocturnal work of his has been responsible for fantastic rumours, giving him the reputation of a mage engaged in obscure magical studies. Visitors to his little pavilion-home have found it less sensationally occupied with detailed drafting of temple-plans, meticulous measurements, classifications, mathematical calculations. For years Mademoiselle Lamy has worked daily in the Temple of Luxor, measuring and drawing every feature. It is largely on her beautiful and exact reproductions that M. de Lubicz has relied for the concrete illustrations of his theories.

It was M. Alexandre Varille, however, a French archeologist in the Egyptian Service of Antiquities, who first gave publicity to the new ideas by the publication of a study entitled : *Quelques Caractéristiques du Temple Pharaonique* ; and the following is a compressed translation of some of his more significant passages : 'The Egyptian Temple (he writes) is in the likeness of the sky by its connection with astronomic periods and its harmonisation with the revolution of the stars. It is, therefore, essentially conceived as a construction in evolution. Certain temples are consecrated to absolute cosmic principles. Others are temples of particular moments, and their plans can be radically changed according to the period. The King constructs his temple according to the nature which he incarnates, giving it the character of his time but including his past and leaving it a possibility of becoming. The temple will be enlarged by his successors according to its preconceived phases. The plans of later temples, as shown by inscriptions, are conceived in accordance with models of architects of the Old Kingdom. There is a unique architectural tradition, established during the Old Kingdom and preserved in the secrecy of the temples. The temples aim at expressing, in their architecture and their decoration, a truth or a cosmic law or a detail of its play. Everything is symbolical in the temple. There is no fantasy in the detail. The canon is rigid. Nothing is sacrificed to æsthetics.

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The temples express a geometrical science, that of transformations, of universal functions.

'The plan of a temple is hardly ever quite symmetrical. The variations are generally intentional. A destroyed column, for instance, should never be reconstructed on the model of its neighbour; for they may have been intentionally different. The materials employed in the construction of the temple always have a symbolic value. Elements of decoration having no further value are effaced. Sometimes traces of the ancient silhouette are preserved in the ground of the new one to facilitate understanding. There are cases of temporary effacements of bas-reliefs or inscriptions, followed by restorations, either in the name of their original author or in that of the restorer. A characteristic renewal of a testimony intended to last is to be found in the statue and the bas-relief which are usually said to be 'usurped' because the cartouche of a king is replaced by that of a successor. It is not a question of impiety but of the affirmation of a programme under a new name. The frequent maintenance, in a very visible position, of the name of the person against whom the sacrilegious act is said to have been committed, by the side of the name of the so-called usurper, is an obvious proof of the error of this Egyptological interpretation.

'Unfinished statues and bas-reliefs, as if the artist had suddenly abandoned the work on learning of the death of his master, are really part of a precise programme, the symbolic expression of incomplete or passing states. Progressive development is expressed by a series of analogous motives beginning with a summary outline, continuing with designs more and more precise, and ending with a subject completely sculptured. In the foundations of numerous temples are found architectural elements of previous temples. With the advent of a new epoch, determined by the astronomers, the ruling King destroys the monuments of his ancestors, to re-make them more vigorously. Of these older monuments he preserves the essential elements in the foundations of his new constructions, in which are expressed the principles corresponding to his reign. If any of these blocks in foundations are to be displaced in the course of excavation, it is important to note beforehand very exactly their position, their level, and the direction of the decorated surfaces. Pharaonic Egypt has inscribed in stone the most astonishing tradition. Its sages knew how to figure by means of symbols a true representation of cosmic values. They

never ceased representing the total correspondence of man to his universe. We have lost the great tradition but it is embodied in the temples, which must, therefore, be piously safeguarded, without ever modifying the slightest detail by stupid restorations. New Viollet-le-Ducs are not wanted in Egypt.'

From this incomplete summary have been omitted M. Varille's illustrations of his theories—concrete illustrations taken from various Pharaonic temples. Later in the same year appeared *Dissertation sur une Stèle Pharaonique* by Alexandre Varille, with a preface by M. de Lubicz and commentaries by Madame de Lubicz. This booklet deals with a Pharaonic stela in the Museum of Geneva, on which are represented a scribe of the Royal Tables and his mother paying homage to Osiris, with an inscription containing the prayer of the scribe and his laudatory account of his own humdrum life. An analysis is made of the possibilities of symbolic interpretation of the figuration and inscription giving a profounder sense to the banalities of a literal version.

In 1947 appeared *A propos des Pyramides de Snefrou*, by Alexandre Varille, dealing more particularly with one of the pyramids of the Pharaoh Snefrou, of the Fourth Dynasty and father of Kheops, the builder of the great Pyramid of Giza. This pyramid, at Dakhshour, near Saqqara, has been called the *rhomboidal* or 'blunted' pyramid, but should more properly, according to M. Varille, be termed the 'double pyramid' or 'pyramid with two slopes.' He contests the view that this monument was the result of an architectural groping in search of the simple pyramidal form; for its construction, the two slopes of which were planned from the laying of the first stone, presented greater difficulties than those involved in the building of a regular pyramid. The Egyptians, M. Varille remarks, often affirmed that they knew the Law of Number, and the Greeks stated that they had learnt it from the Egyptians, but both forbade its publication. It is, therefore, not in the texts but in the monuments themselves that this law of measure must be sought. Matyla Ghyka (*Esthétique des proportions dans la Nature et dans les Arts*) has shown, M. Varille continues, that the proportions of the great Pyramid of Kheops proceed from the 'Golden Section'; which is proved by an affirmation of Herodotus that can only result from an application of the Golden Number. It is, therefore, not absurd to seek for the characteristics of the double pyramid of Dakhshour from the geometrical point of view. M. Varille's conclusion is that the 'double pyramid' is the expression of Duality,

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numerous details of the construction being dual and otherwise symbolic of the Principle of Duality.

The attribution of several pyramids to Snefrou raises the problem of the purpose of the pyramids, for all Snefrou's could not have been constructed as a burial-place of the Pharaoh. To this question the great Egyptologist Alexandre Moret, adopting the idea of Michelet regarding the Cathedral, replied: 'The Pyramid was an act of Faith.' It would, M. Varille thinks, be more correct to say that the Pyramid was an act of Faith and the expression of a Knowledge. With the progress of Egyptian archeology, M. Varille concludes, it becomes evident that the Pharaohs of the first five dynasties followed a plan of expression of a pre-established knowledge, which they translated into their mastabas and their pyramids, fixing there the geometrical bases of numbers. Later these bases of knowledge were expressed and developed by writing. Thus Ounas, of the Sixth Dynasty, engraved on the walls of his tomb texts that were a codification of cosmogonic science for the whole duration of the Pharaonic civilisation.

In Cairo these three booklets did not at first attract much attention, beyond the disapproval of orthodox Egyptologists. But in Paris, in the December 1948 number of Georges Bataille's *Review Critique*, appeared an article on the three studies and on the new Egyptology by M. Missac, who had come into contact with its exponents during a visit to Egypt. M. Missac, who summarised the new theories and their applications, took a very sympathetic view of them, which is all the more remarkable, as he frankly disagreed with the metaphysical conclusions of the new school. In certain passages of his article M. Drioton, the distinguished Director-General of the Egyptian Services of Antiquities, saw an unjustifiable attack on the work of restoration by his department at Karnak—the reconstitution of the Temple of Sesostri's 1st, all the blocks composing it having been extracted from the third pylon where they had been used as foundation materials. The new school holds that these 're-employments' of the materials of older temples in the foundations of later ones have a significance, and that it is essential, therefore, not to destroy evidence by displacements. A letter from M. Drioton was published in *Critique* of June, 1949, taking exception to M. Missac's observations. M. Missac, in his reply, disclaimed any intention of criticising the Service of Antiquities and expressed regrets that his remarks should have been misunderstood. But M. Drioton in his letter had spoken of the three booklets as being

'*en marge de l'égyptologie*' and of the theory as being '*fumeuse et indémontrable*'; and M. Missac retorted that only technical discussion could decide whether these qualifications or the new theories were valid.

In the early autumn of 1949 appeared a work of M. de Lubicz entitled *Le Temple dans l'Homme*, which deals particularly with the symbolic significance of the Temple of Luxor but also more generally with ancient Egyptian knowledge and methods of expression. In the Temple of Luxor M. de Lubicz finds the representation of the human microcosm. As the Gothic cathedral represents the Cross, and even sometimes incurses the apse '*en souvenir de la tête penchée du Seigneur crucifié*,' so the Temple of Luxor represents the human body in movement or growth, reflected in the deviation of the plan of the Temple. A tracing of an average human skeleton placed on the ground plan showed a correspondence of the various parts and organs of the body with the various parts of the Temple, the whole of which becomes a book explaining the secret functions of the organs and nervous centres. But, continues M. de Lubicz, Man, the Microcosm, is a summary of the Universe, the Macrocosm. If he constitutes an *ensemble*, a Unity which has its harmony, he is himself part of a whole. He cannot be born except in relation to his environment, which extends as far as the solar system. In the Temple of Luxor are to be found indications of the relationship of Man to the Universe. Man is taken as the symbol of the Universe and his growth as a summary of universal evolution.

In so brief a summary much must be omitted. On the imagery used by the Egyptians, for instance, and our own use of conventional language M. de Lubicz has some interesting remarks to make. In our conversational language, he observes, the dictionary specifies and limits the meaning of each word. We cannot understand anything more than the dictionary knows. Our alphabetical signs express by themselves only sounds; thus our alphabet is only a mechanical means of combining the words of the dictionary and transmitting a thought included in it. The number of words is limited to acquired notions. Thought can make deep study of established phenomena and seek their causes. But, as soon as it approaches metaphysics, it no longer finds in our languages and writings means to express itself. Abstract notions, formulated in words, for which we lack the concepts, are rendered objective and lose their significance.

If an unknown phenomenon appears, instead of seeking the

nature of its cause, we reduce cause and phenomenon to the domain of mechanical mentality, to our own limits. The simple image proves that there is a means of expressing ourselves without limiting the notion to a definite form, and of transcribing our thought without imposing our personal mentality on the reader of the image. The rationalist habit is to reduce everything to Time and Space, to quantity. The image, on the contrary, leaves the door open to the qualitative and functional world. We say: 'A man is walking.' We see a man walking, but we see him in a limited way: it is only the fact of moving, of walking, that we imagine. We can then place him in the past, present, future: we can situate this movement in Time and Space. On the contrary, if we see an image representing a man walking, we no longer imagine him, no longer situate him: he is there: it is the function, and the quality of that function, that interest us. We can then paint the man green: it is no longer simply the function of walking with the legs that is evoked: the movement may signify growth or vegetation. Walking and growing are two different functions; but in reality there is an abstract connection between them: it is movement without consideration of Time or Way.

Thus figuration—the symbol—is our only veritable means of transmitting an esoteric meaning, which in alphabetical writing we must look for in the parable, or eventually in the metaphor or allegory. But our word 'symbol,' which implies a figure or a sign representing by analogy or convention an idea, does not give the exact sense of symbol as conceived by the Ancient Egyptians. Preferable is the Egyptian term 'Medou Neter'—inadequately translated into Greek as hieroglyphs—or 'Signs bearing Neters'—Neter signifying the Principle or the Platonic Idea. Symbol in this sense is the thing itself, or the idea materialised which it evokes: it does not represent the idea only by analogy. M. de Lubicz insists on the vitalist character of Egyptian thought and expression. Life is the faculty of reaction. Our logic is cerebral or equational, that is to say syllogistic: it is a simple mechanical logic, that of quantity: the comparison of two elements defines a third—a quantitative equation. On the contrary, vital logic is purely functional and quantitatively unforeseeable, owing to the multitude of elements which may intervene in the elaboration of an effect. With this logic it is a question of gestation. Vital logic applies to the reactive or vital function. He compares the vitalist measures used by the Egyptians—cubit and span—with the artificial metric system, and

argues that the former have a functional nature in a moving and variable universe which renders illusory our decimal and purely quantitative measures. M. de Lubicz also touches on the Golden Number and its illustration in Greek and Ancient Egyptian proportions.

Towards the end of 1949 *La Table Ronde*, a Parisian Review of which M. Mauriac is the chief editor, published an account by Cocteau of his visit to Luxor and of his contacts with the New Egyptology, of which he expressed enthusiastic approval; but about the same time *La Revue du Caire*, a lively Cairo French-language Review, the editor of which is a Greek resident in Egypt, M. Alexandre Papadopoulos, published a criticism of M. de Lubicz's book by M. Papadopoulos, containing a violent attack on the book, and ending with a depreciation of Ancient Egyptian knowledge and with the assertion that 'Man in antiquity only progressed in proportion as he turned his back on myths of every origin in the light of Hellenic rationalism.' The tip of the ear of the Hellenic faun could scarcely have been more obvious. M. de Lubicz's reply in the February number was accompanied by a commentary in which M. Papadopoulos included a letter to himself from M. Drioton expressing full agreement with the former's original article.

Several distinguished Frenchmen, of science and letters, visiting Egypt during the early months of this year, were, it seems, more favourably impressed by the new theories. M. André Rousseaux, in the course of a farewell tribute to Egypt at the end of March, spoke of '*la mystique multi-millénaire qui, dans le cadre prestigieux de Louxor et de Karnak, est peut-être en voie de s'éveiller, par des révélations érudites, à une vie nouvelle.*' *Le Figaro Littéraire* of April 8th, 1950, published a long article by André Rousseaux entitled: '*A Louksor la guerre froide est déclarée entre les symbolistes et les historiens.*' In this article M. Rousseaux recounts how, before he went to Luxor, he had been told stories of a mage engaged in nocturnal rites, how on meeting M. de Lubicz he had found a man '*d'une haute tenue intellectuelle,*' how impressed he had been by the scientific atmosphere in which the family was working. While rendering this homage, he criticises *Le Temple dans l'Homme*, 'as treating too disconnectedly and too peremptorily themes requiring magisterial development.' (M. Rousseaux had perhaps forgotten that the author himself states that each chapter is presented as an islet only connected with the others by a directing thought, in conformity with the Pharaonic mentality, and that his book is merely a preliminary summing-up of

the considerable work which the subject requires). M. Rousseaux speaks enthusiastically of M. Varille, whose name, he foresees, will perhaps shine in the annals of Egyptology like that of a Mariette or a Champollion. He points out that M. Varille is a highly qualified Egyptologist, with qualifications recognised by his peers, who may be inclined to apply the epithet of amateur to M. de Lubicz, and gives an impartial, but somewhat sketchy, account of the two conflicting theories, that of the 'symbolists' and that of the 'historians.' Finally, he suggests a congress next winter at Luxor, where demonstrations could be made before the monuments on which they are based. 'Historians' and 'symbolists' would be invited in turn to defend their theories. The best qualified *savants* of various countries should be invited, and the circle of specialists should be enlarged by the presence of some eminent humanists and philosophers, competent to judge the range of this evolution of Egyptology. Thus it would be possible to ascertain whether Egyptology is indeed on the way to furnishing an opportunity for a considerable advance in human knowledge.

M. Rousseaux' suggestion seems a little premature. More preparatory effort is required before such a congress could be usefully assembled; and the symbolists must produce more detailed work in illustration of their theories. But, whatever may be thought of these theories, their exponents cannot be classified among the sentimentalists. M. de Lubicz is scientifically qualified, and M. Varille is recognised as an eminent excavator and philologist. It is right that they should be given an opportunity of demonstrating the beliefs they hold. In an exoteric age many will at first be repelled by the more esoteric features of the new Egyptology. Later, it may strike them as not improbable that ancient Egyptian records, monumental and figurative, contain a symbolism that, besides giving us a truer picture of the oldest known civilisation, might perhaps throw some light on problems that we ourselves have long been trying to unravel. Symbolism or literalism—there is the basic issue. But, even though the symbolist claims are not proved in full, enough may stand the test of scientific examination to revolutionise Egyptology.

Roger Fenton in the Crimea

A Photographic Supplement

AN admirable new biography of Florence Nightingale has helped to revive interest in the Crimean campaign. Kinglake was its official historian ; but Roger Fenton, employing his own methods, produced an almost equally important record of the background of the fighting. With a large array of technical equipment, including the famous 'Photographic Van' which served him as a dark room, Fenton reached the Crimea in March 1855 and remained there till the following July, when he returned to England, having produced no less than three hundred photographs. He used throughout the 'wet plate' process—'dry plates' were not invented until 1871—and was therefore unable to take photographs of moving subjects ; but his pictures of life behind the lines possess great dramatic quality. They were secured, moreover, in conditions that few modern photographers would be prepared to tolerate. 'When my van door is closed,' he wrote ' . . . perspiration is running down my face, and dropping off me like tears. . . . The developing water is so hot that I can hardly bear my hands in it.' To increase his difficulties, he was continually being badgered to make portraits of individual soldiers ; and, 'if I refuse to take them, I get no facilities for conveying my van from one locality to another.' At home his achievement was greatly admired, and received the approval of the Queen and the Prince Consort, who commissioned him to take informal photographs of the royal family. Fenton also took many topographical photographs, and became the first secretary of the Royal Photographic Society before his death in 1869. On the following pages we reproduce twelve examples of Roger Fenton's talent, accompanied by a number of explanatory extracts from his private letters. For both we are indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Helmut Gernsheim, who allowed us to avail ourselves of his incomparable collection of photographic archives.

I. THE COUNCIL OF WAR HELD IN THE EARLY MORNING BEFORE
THE TAKING OF THE MAMELON : LORD RAGLAN, OMAR
PASHA, GENERAL PELISSIER.

8 June, 1855.

' . . . Everybody knew that it promised to be a terrible encounter, but soon excitement overcame apprehension and everybody set to work in high spirits to prepare. It was nearly 4 and there was no time to get dinner so each one snatched up what he could . . . I went down to the edge of the ravine down which the troops were to march down to the trenches before the attack. The French columns were approaching, Zouaves leading ; as they drew near our soldiers not on duty stood as a hedge one either side and cheered each Regt. as they passed. Most of the French seemed wild with excitement though some looked very anxious and well they might for it was certain that many of those voices cheering so loudly would be still in death before the sun had set.'

2. LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR JOHN CAMPBELL AND CAPTAIN HUME.

19 April, 1855.

' . . . At Cathcart's Hill Sir John Campbell commands the division and I had received a message from him offering assistance if I would come there, so I presented myself to him and at once told him my difficulties about a servant and was immediately invited to take up my quarters with him. "Meanwhile," said he, "come down and take a glass of sherry," and he led the way into a hole in the ground, a natural cavern which he had found and taken possession of just before the storm of the 14 of November. I tried to take a picture of the town but the day though fine was hazy and I could not succeed. I took some nice groups however and some portraits, one of the general sitting at the door of his tent. At 7 we sat down to dinner in the cavern, the general, his aides Captain Hume, Lundgras and Captain Layard, a brother of the traveller, and a very comfortable party and jolly picture we made, a huge barrel of beer in one corner and the arms stuck into nooks in the rocks giving us the look of a party of smugglers.'

3. GENERAL BOSQUET AND CAPTAIN DAMPIÈRE.

5 May, 1855.

' . . . General Bosquet is very good to take, resembling much the portrait of Napoleon when he began to grow stout, only there is an expression of frankness and good temper which does not exist in Napoleon's portrait.'

4. THE ORDNANCE WHARF, BALACLAVA.

6 March, 1855.

' . . . The ground is everywhere thickly strewn with barley, the harbour is crammed with ships lying closer than in any docks, many of them empty, doing nothing themselves and keeping others from discharging their cargo. . . .'

5. COSSACK BAY, BALACLAVA.

8 March, 1855.

' . . . No one I think ever saw so many vessels crowded together in so small a space as in this little harbour. It is said there are 150 here now and the Captain of the Port who succeeds in preserving any approach to order must be a man of ability.'

6. A QUIET DAY IN THE MORTAR BATTERY.

24 April, 1855.

' There are 2 things I have enjoyed whilst staying with Sir John, the first lying in bed with the tent door open listening and watching the incessant fire of shot, shell and musketry ; again about 7 there is often a pause and then while breakfast is getting ready I pick out a nice stone to lean against and lie down and listen to the larks overhead and watch the dreamy looking town which is at that time generally half bathed in mist ; an occasional white puff shows that they are watchful in the quiet place and sometimes two opposing batteries have a little chat all alone, and I establish myself as self-appointed arbiter of the event, giving equal praise to the Malakoff when it drops a shell neatly in the rear of the batteries as to Gordon's battery when it makes the dust fly in an embrasure of the Malakoff. . . . '

7. COOKHOUSE OF THE 8TH HUSSARS.

8. CAPTAIN LORD BALGONIE, GRENADIER GUARDS.

9. LIEUT.-COLONEL SEYMOUR, FUSILIERS.

10. LIEUTENANT GRILLS, R.H.A.

11. CAPTAIN LILLEY, FIELD TRAIN.

8 March, 1855.

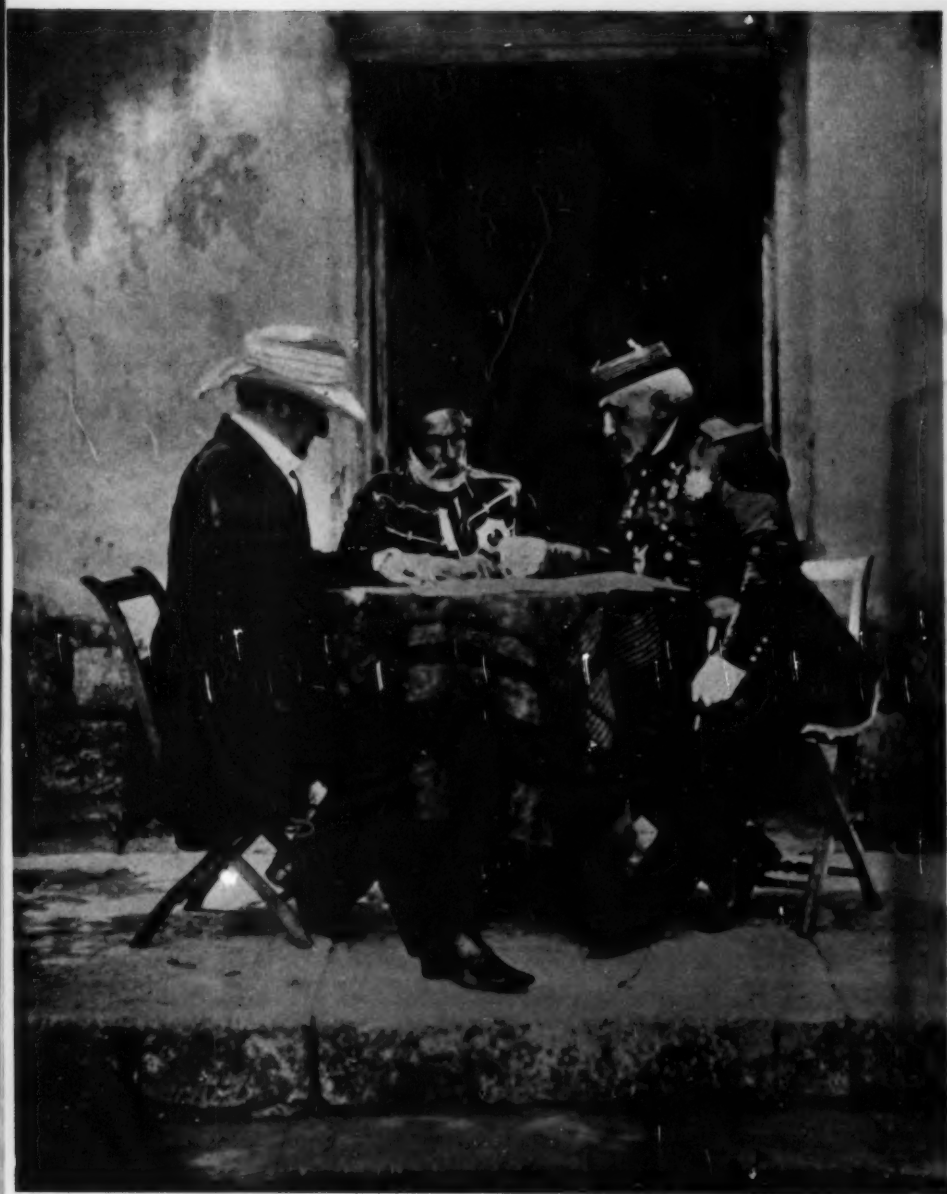
' . . . Here we fell in with one of the 17th Light Dragoons who pointed out the scene of the famous cavalry charge. While musing upon this up came some horses led and mounted. " There," said he, " is our regiment." I counted them, 13 in all. " You don't tell me that these are all ? " " All that we can mount," he replied. These horses were a sad spectacle, rough, lanky, their heads down, their tails worn to the stumps, most of them shewing great patches of bare skin, they seem to be too far gone to be brought round by the present fine weather and plentiful supply of forage.'

12. LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR GEORGE BROWN AND STAFF.

Left to right—Major Hallewell, Colonel Brownrigg, an orderly, Sir George Brown, Captain Pearson, Colonel Airey, Captain Markham, Captain Ponsonby.

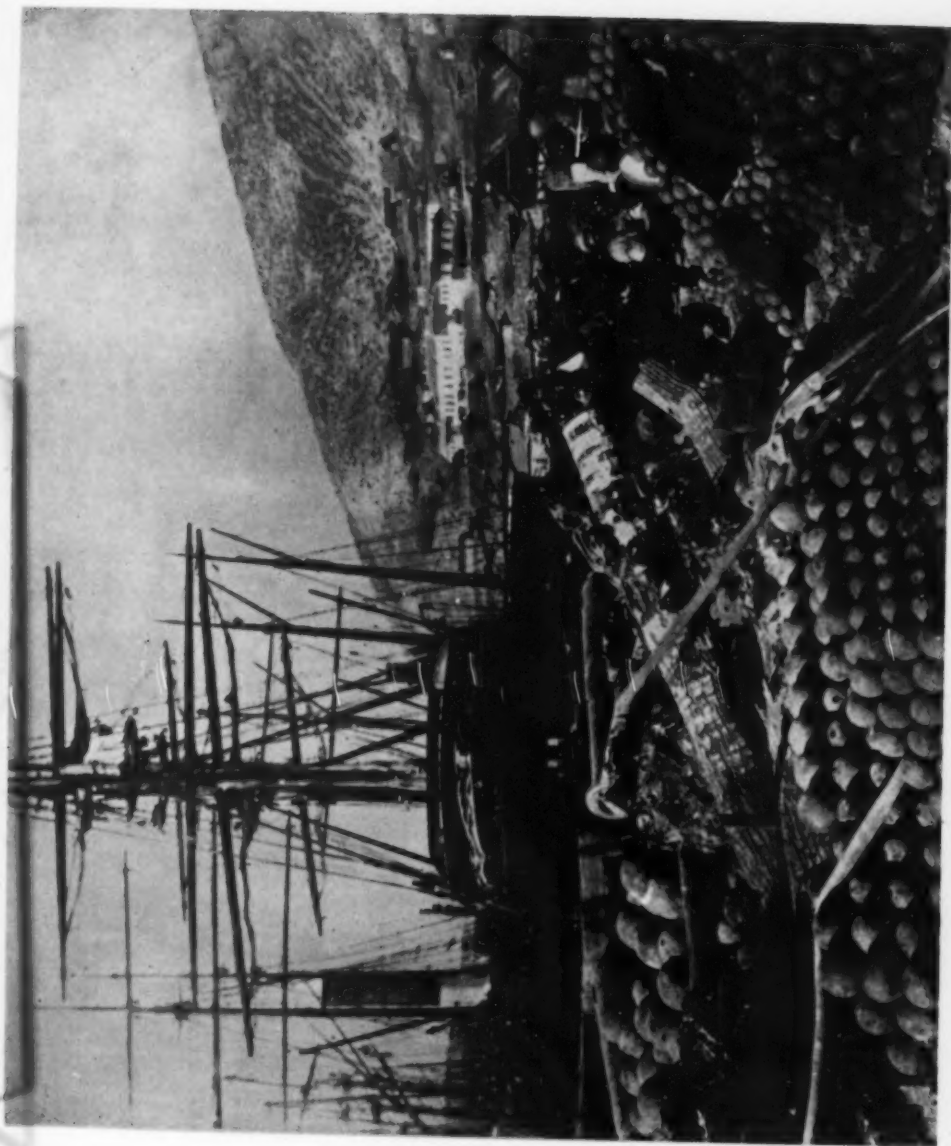
5 March, 1855.

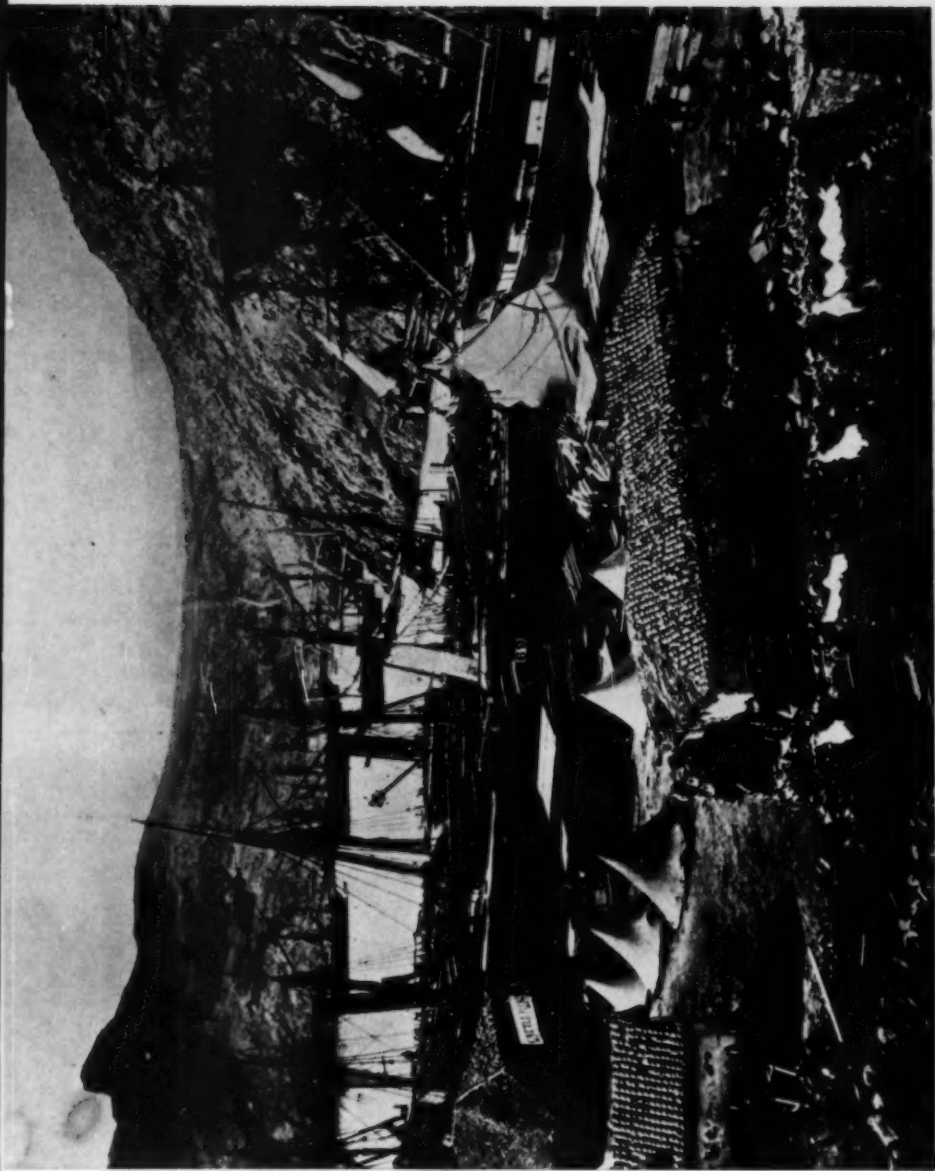
'Yesterday was May day and a lovely day we had. I got Sir George Brown to sit to me, he was very amiable, put on his uniform and a cocked hat and did just as I wished him. . . .'

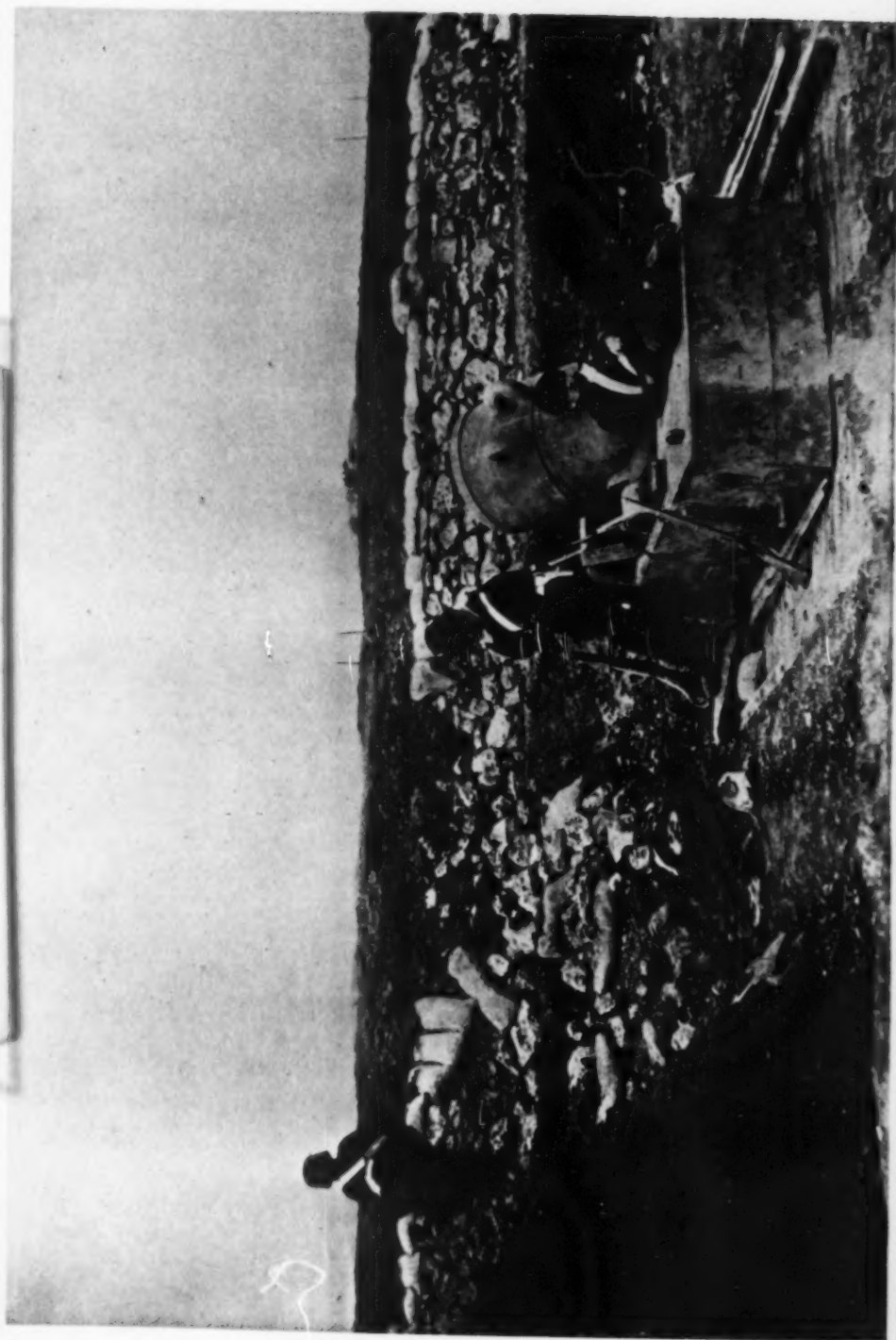










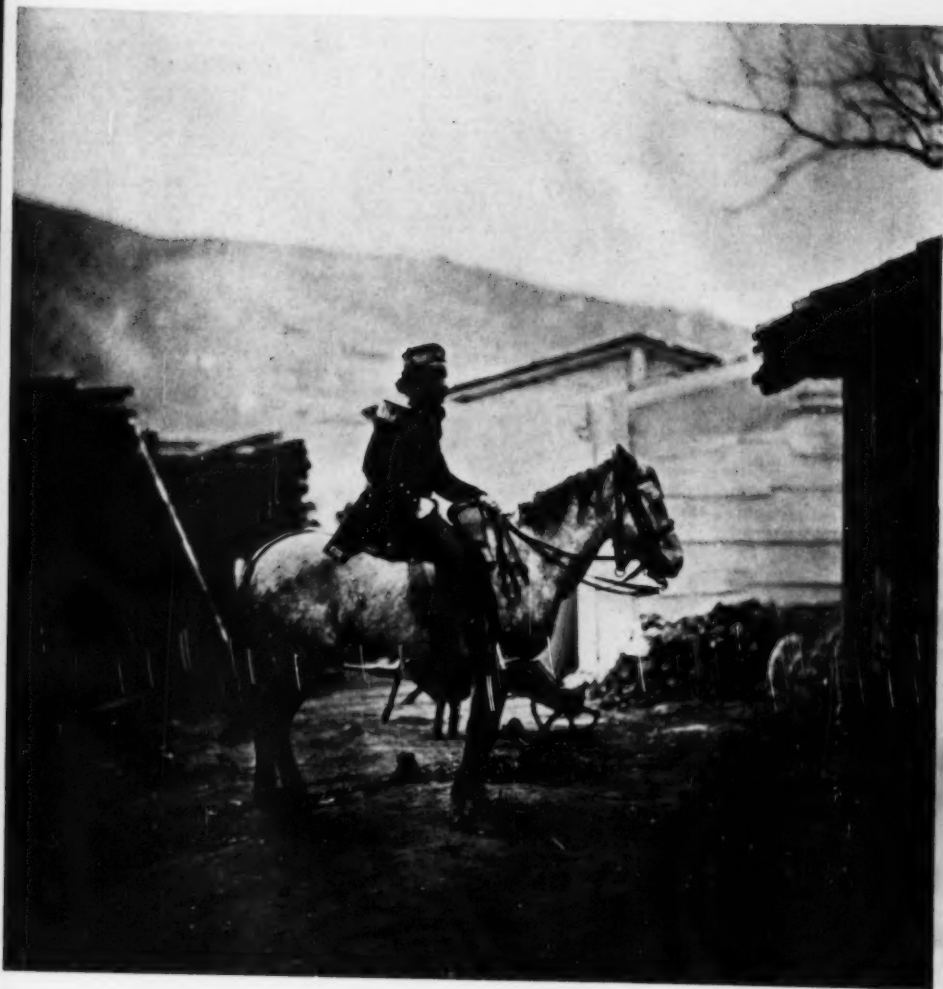








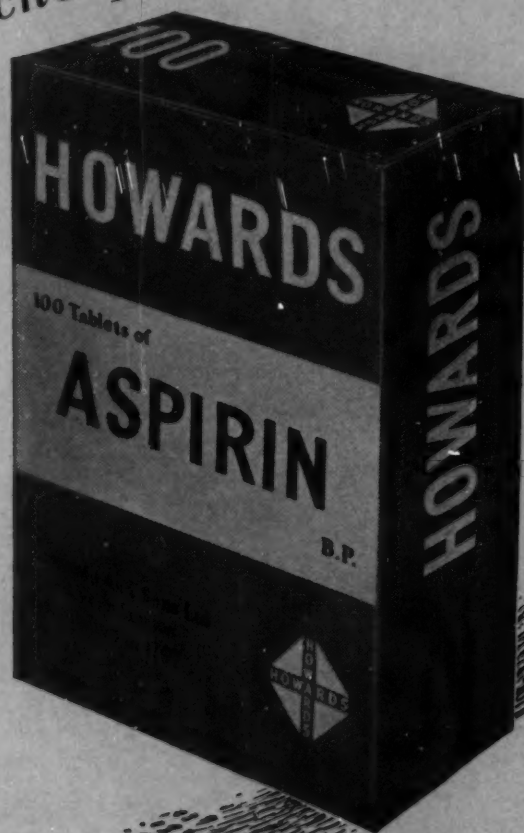








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